the weekly
Standard
NOVEMBER 3, 2003 • $3.95

AL QAEDA'S NEW BASE
JEFFREY BELL

Iran's First Lady

Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi, a voice for human rights in the Muslim world

An interview by Amir Taheri

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HOW DEREGULATION HELPED PUT THE CABLE INDUSTRY INTO

faster forward

Congress did a smart thing in 1996. When it deregulated the cable industry, it inspired cable companies to invest in new technologies and services.

Everybody's won.

>>> The cable industry has helped create over half a million new American jobs in the last 10 years.

>>> Thousands of schools receive free educational programming and high-speed Internet service, courtesy of cable companies.

>>> Millions of Americans now get broadband service through their cable companies. And over 2.5 million customers have already signed up for telephone service from their cable companies.

>>> Billions of dollars have flowed into the American high-technology sector from the cable industry.

>>> And perhaps most importantly, cable customers enjoy unprecedented choice and control over the thousands of hours of high-quality entertainment that flow into their homes every week.

OVER $75 BILLION INVESTED IN NEW TECHNOLOGIES SINCE 1996

When Congress was considering whether to deregulate the cable industry seven years ago, cable companies promised to invest in new people-pleasing technologies and programming.

More than $75 billion later, cable customers are enjoying an avalanche of new services...

FROM HI-DEF TO THE WWW

A cable home is quite different from a non-cable home these days. It's more likely to have Video-On-Demand that puts people in complete control of their TV schedules. And it may be enjoying high-speed Internet service that leaves dial-up and DSL in the digital dust.

Add in the clarity of high-definition TV as well as hundreds of new digital video and audio channels... and the totally wired home has arrived.

JOBS, SCHOOLS AND TAXES

Despite the economic challenges that have afflicted other industries, cable companies have helped create over half a million new American jobs in the last 10 years. In fact, from 1990 to 2002, cable accounted for nearly 3% of new jobs in our country.

Cable companies provide commercial-free educational programming and high-speed Internet service to thousands of schools and millions of students, free of charge.

Last but not least, cable companies paid more than $2 billion in franchise fees to local communities last year.

CRITICS AND VIEWERS LOVE CABLE

It's hard to overstate how cable has inspired television writers and directors. Channels like MTV, ESPN and The History Channel as well as shows like *Six Feet Under*, *Trading Spaces* and *SpongeBob SquarePants* have broken new ground.

Critics have responded. Just a few weeks ago, cable shows won Emmy Awards in category after category – 78 winners in all. Same story earlier this year when the Peabodys and Golden Globes were announced.

And viewers are voting with their remotes. For the first time, more people are watching cable during primetime than the broadcast networks. And cable news channels account for 60% of all TV news viewership.

ONE OF THE BEST ENTERTAINMENT VALUES IN AMERICA

With so much entertainment and information now available at the touch of a remote, most Americans feel that cable is one of the best values in entertainment today.

To compare, the average monthly basic cable bill is about $40, less than what it costs to take a family of four to a single movie. People think that's a pretty good deal.

A DEREGULATION SUCCESS STORY

In the past seven years, the cable industry has undergone a major transformation. Today's cable companies are more consumer-focused than ever before. Customer satisfaction is on the rise.

It's all because deregulation enabled cable companies to invest in new technologies and services to compete for customers. And compete they do. They battle with the satellite dish companies for TV customers. They compete with the phone companies for Internet and phone service. And as they introduce time-shifting technologies, they go up against video stores.

These are the results of Congress deregulating the cable industry. Talk about impact. This is not the cable business of seven years ago. This is an industry that's on the move. On faster forward, if you will.

NATIONAL CABLE & TELECOMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION

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Mercy in Florida

Two weeks ago Wesley J. Smith wrote in these pages about the case of Terri Schiavo, the brain-damaged Clearwater, Florida, woman whose husband wants her dead. Unfortunately for her, Michael Schiavo is also his wife's legal guardian, and with the help of his creepy right-to-die lawyer and a compliant Florida judge, he prevailed in a court battle with Terri's parents over the removal of her feeding tube—this, despite Michael's manifest conflicts of interest. Since his wife's brain injury in 1990, Michael has fathered a child by another woman (now expecting their second child) whom he refers to as his fiancée and plans to marry once Terri dies. Rather than pay for his injured wife's therapy—as he promised a malpractice jury he would do—he has spent substantial amounts of the money that jury awarded her on litigation to have her food and water tube removed. The argument that she would want this is basically that he says so.

It now turns out the headline on Smith's article—"No Mercy in Florida"—was inaccurate. Last week the Florida legislature passed "Terri's Law," empowering the governor to intervene in "nutrition and hydration" cases under a limited number of circumstances. These include cases where the "patient has no written advance directive" and where "a member of that patient's family has challenged the withholding of nutrition and hydration." To the fury of Michael Schiavo and a whole host of *bien-pensant* but uninformed liberal agitators—everyone from the ACLU, to the AARP, to Laurence Tribe—Governor Jeb Bush did issue a stay on October 21, and Terri Schiavo is again being fed and hydrated, awaiting the appointment of an independent guardian to advise the court on her interests.

Many of those now sputtering at the legislature and governor have a remarkably loose grasp of the facts of the case. All they seem to know is that conservative pro-lifers at the grass-roots level were ardently pleading Terri's case and that someone named Bush heard their pleas. On this basis, they have swung into action. For instance, the state director of the American Association of Retired Persons told the South Florida *Sun-Sentinel*, "Our members tell us that [medical self-determination] is a very important issue to them.... They're telling us they are very disturbed to think they could sign a living will or do not resuscitate order and have it overridden by the legislature." But of course the whole point of the case—and of Terri's Law—is that she didn't sign any such documents. And the more one knows of her husband, the less inclined one is to take his word about what she would have wanted. Perhaps the AARP should be reassuring its members and dispelling their mistaken impressions, instead of fanning their fears.

If it were not a misleadingly named partisan lobby, the ACLU for its part might have intervened on Terri's behalf, rather than her husband's. Perhaps they would have if they had known that liberal disability activists and not just right-to-lifers were pleased to see the Florida legislature act. Or perhaps if they had been aware that Terri's husband had prevented a priest from giving her last rites, lest by swallowing communion she prove that she might be able to survive without tube-feeding. Of course, that assumes the group cares a whit about civil liberties.

But enough about the critics. The lawmakers and governor of Florida rose to the occasion. Wesley J. Smith, in a follow-up article on our website last week, quoted Terri's elated lawyer, Patricia Anderson, who told him, "Every day that Terri Schiavo is alive is a good day." And, he added, "for those who believe in the sanctity and equality of human life, October 21, 2003, was a very good day indeed." ♦

The Case of the Missing News Service

October 16 was an important news day for Muslims and Jews. Not that you could tell from reading Reuters.

The address of Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad to 57 nations at the Organization of the Islamic Conference—in which he obsessed over the hidden influence of the Jews on world affairs—was beamed all over the globe by hundreds of news media on the day it took place. But Reuters didn't carry the speech. There was nothing on their website about the OIC at all on the 16th, and at first only a tiny mention (which we saw on *Forbes.com*), with this interesting description of Mahathir's anti-Semitic message:

> PUTRAJAYA, Malaysia — Host Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad told an Islamic summit in Malaysia that Muslims must outsmart Israel in negotiations, but most eyes were on Russian guest President Vladimir Putin's stance on Iraq.

That's a unique angle. Hands up, everyone who even knew that Putin attended the speech.

The next day, Reuters' summation was titled "Islamic Nations End Summit, Temper Iraq Stance." Their description of the speech:

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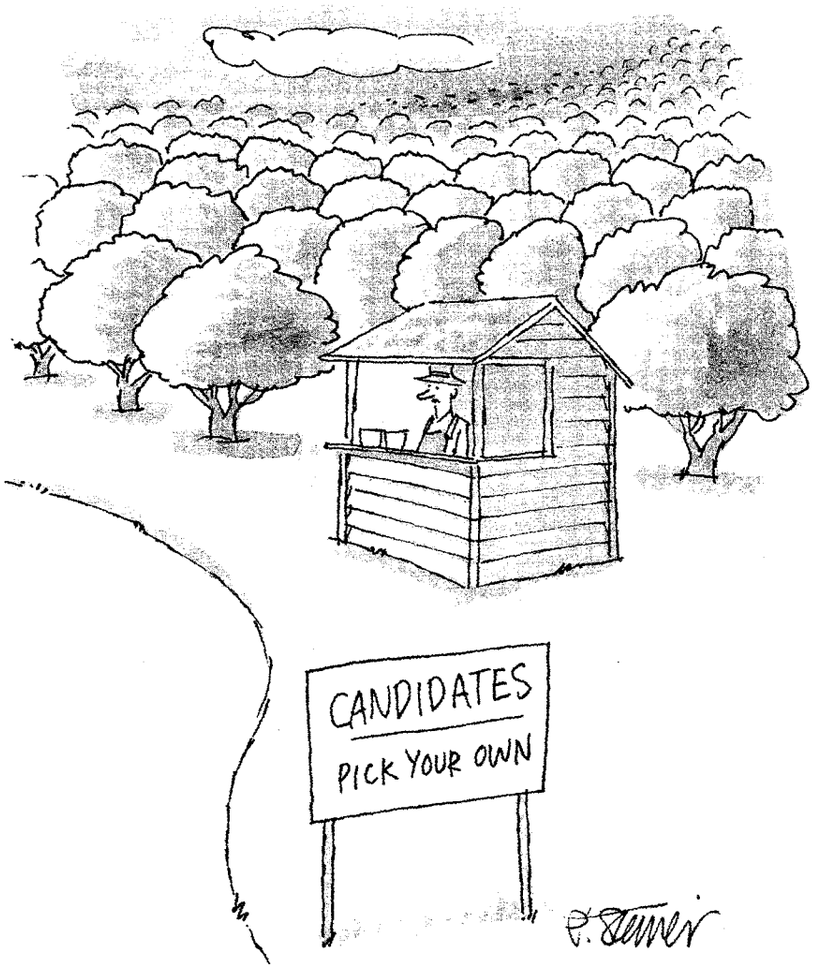

Mahathir, who retires on October 31 after 22 years in power, told Muslim delegates to push for peace after decades of conflict with Israel in a typically blunt speech that included jibes about the influence of Jews over Western powers.

A quick review of one of Mahathir's "jibes":

> They survived 2000 years of pogroms not by hitting back, but by thinking. They invented and successfully promoted socialism, communism, human rights and democracy so that persecuting them would appear to be wrong, so they may enjoy equal rights with others. With these they have now gained control of the most powerful countries and they, this tiny community, have become a world power.

Later that afternoon, after many world leaders had denounced the speech, Reuters discovered this new angle, in an article titled "Mahathir Speech on Jews Stirs Storm in West." (There's no mention of Putin in it. All eyes must have gotten tired of looking at him.)

One has to wonder: Where was Reuters when the "storm" descended? Is their bias so heavy-handed that they no longer report on anti-Semitic and anti-Western speeches by Muslims until after the world protests? Perhaps their motto, "Know. Now." needs a bit of tweaking: We recommend "Know. Not." ♦

Temperatures in Hell May Fall Below 32

The most notorious Pulitzer in history—for Walter Duranty's coverup of Stalin's crimes—may be retracted. Across America, longtime *New York Times* critics like THE SCRAPBOOK choked on their Cheerios last Thursday upon seeing this headline: "Times Should Lose Pulitzer From 30's, Consultant Says."

The story continued in the same astonishing vein: "A Columbia University history professor hired by The New York Times to make an independent assessment of the coverage of one of its correspondents in the Soviet Union during the 1930's said yesterday that the Pulitzer Prize the reporter received should be rescinded because of his 'lack of balance' in covering Stalin's government."

But wait, there's more: "In his report to The Times, [Columbia history professor Mark von Hagen] described the coverage for which Mr. Duranty won the Pulitzer—his writing in 1931, a year before the onset of the [Ukraine] famine—as a 'dull and largely uncritical recitation of Soviet sources.'"

The only false note: Executive editor Bill Keller preposterously compared the potential retraction of the prize to "airbrushing history" Soviet style. Fine. We'll happily settle for an asterisk in the Pulitzer listings. ♦

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Casual

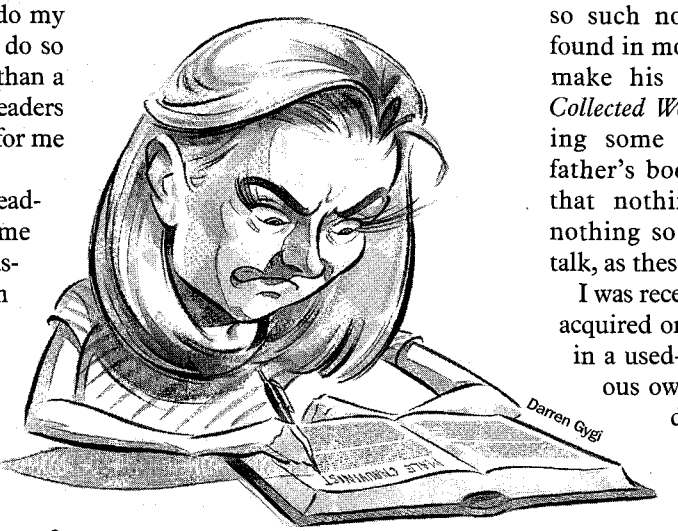
MARGINALIZED

I was reading along in a library copy of C.S. Lewis's book *The Four Loves*, which, to my mild chagrin, had been underlined and sidelined by various earlier readers using different markers: both fine and soft pencils and a ballpoint pen. I'm afraid that the writing of Lewis, a wise man whose style tends toward the aphoristic, encourages this activity. I am a sideliner of books myself, usually using a light pencil to do my marking. But I much prefer to do so on a virgin page, and it's more than a little distracting to have other readers underscore significant passages for me before I come to a book.

I got used to these previous readers, most of whom seemed to me percipient in their choices of passages to underscore, but then, in Lewis's chapter "Friendship," I encountered someone—a woman, I suspect—who went bonkers. Using her ballpoint pen like a dagger, she carved imprecations into the book's margins. In the few pages in which Lewis writes of the complexities of friendship between men and women, she wrote, all in capital letters, with no extra charge for the exclamation marks, "MALE CHAUVINIST!!!" On the facing page she noted "What is this bull sh—?!" And atop the following page, simply, "bull s—!" She was not very happy, either, with Lewis's connection between friendship and religion, making a looping mark around the eight or nine sentences he devotes to the connection and, going off the rails completely now, providing the not quite intelligible response, "bull suck."

It occurred to me to correct her vituperations, for the taurine droppings she refers to are spelled as one word, not two. Someone else, a cooler head with an educational impulse and working in faint pencil markings, also tried to straighten her out. "He's describing what happens—not what should be," this sensible fellow advised, and a bit later he patiently instructed, "Reread all of it!" But it's too late; she's a goner—clearly beyond all hope of education or exhortation.

The temptation to write in the margins of books is not difficult to understand. It might even be construed as a compliment to the author, suggesting that what he wrote is so provocative as to require a direct response. In this wise, marginalia could be described as the print equivalent of what in the computer age goes by the name of "interactive."



Literature's most famous marginal commentator was Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Coleridge was a compulsive scribbler in the margins of books, but then he was also a compulsive talker, victim of various overmastering impulses, and the king of intellectual spillage, with endless projects abandoned, work left half-finished, genius unfulfilled. He wrote not only in books he owned but those he borrowed from friends. De Quincey remarked that "Coleridge often spoiled a book but in the course of doing so, he enriched that book with so many and so valuable notes, tossing about him, with such lavish profusion, from such a cornucopia of discursive reading, and such a fusing intellect, commentaries so many-angled and so many-coloured that I have envied many a man whose luck has placed him in the way of such injuries."

Sometimes Coleridge's marginalia were small explosions of contempt: "A very vile Poem, Mister J. Godwin, take a Brother Bard's word for it!" But more often he would inscribe little essaylets in the margins. He did this in sufficient number—8,000 or so such notes have thus far been found in more than 450 books—as to make his marginalia part of his *Collected Works*. His daughter, reading some of these notes in her father's books after his death, said that nothing brought him back, nothing so much sounded like his talk, as these particular scribblings.

I was recently told by someone who acquired one of my own early books in a used-book shop that its previous owner had expressed strong disagreement with me and had no compunction about setting it out in strong language in my margins. To write, said Stendhal, is to risk being shot in public, but he never said anything about taking the shots in the margins of one's own books. Still, I am honored to join C.S. Lewis in being among the "marginalized."

Used-book shop owners usually erase all the underlining and sidelining in books. A bookseller I know once told me that the most amusing marginal note he ever erased was one that read, "C'mon, Ortega!" Why is this funny? I do not know, but I do know that you cannot say it aloud in other than a whining voice, and I recommend using it when next you stub your toe or spill hot soup on yourself. Doing so, I find, eases the pain.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

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Feeling His Way

Having been a fellow "Predator" on bus two, I have to applaud Matt Labash's insightful reporting of the whole stage-managed media circus that was driven by Arnold's highly motivated and uncannily manipulative press crew ("Arnold Über Alles," Oct. 20). Being a photographer, it was an interesting experience to actually pay for the privilege of taking the same shots of Arnold at a dozen different locations over four days. I guess that's show biz!

Mike Fox
San Francisco, CA

War Games

Robert Kagan and William Kristol's Oct. 20 editorial, "Why We Went to War," fails to address at least two potentially productive alternatives to the way the United States opted to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime—alternatives capable of energizing an impressively multilateral strategy to defuse the threat Saddam posed to U.S. security.

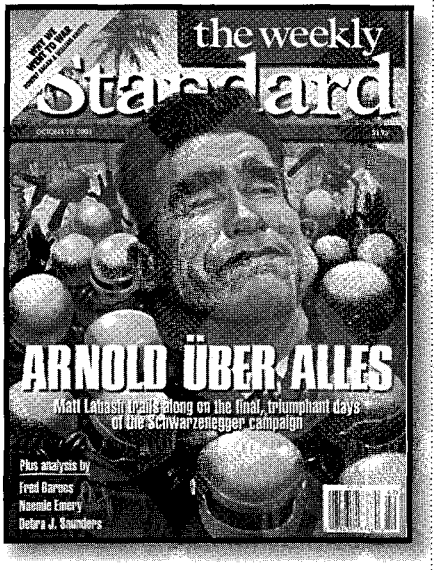
First, the United States could have solicited the multilateral military assistance to which we are entitled as members of NATO (testing the very credibility of this formidable military alliance). The United States could have also designed a dramatic, region-wide, economic-development strategy for the Middle East as the framework for addressing all our concerns in the region.

Unfortunately, neither strategy was effectively pursued by the Bush administration. If the way in which the United States pursued war with Iraq exemplifies our government's approach to other threats to our national security, I am less than confident about the security of the United States and of this country's overall stature in a world in dire need of impressive statesmanship.

David J. Steinberg
Alexandria, VA

I applaud Robert Kagan and William Kristol for their outstanding "Why We Went to War." The real reasons underlying President Bush's decision to remove Saddam Hussein are often lost in the torrent of day-to-day trivialities and spin crafted by Paul Krugman, David Sanger, the *New York Times* editorial staff, and the network news anchors. Indeed, if an intelligent person were to listen only to the mainstream media since Saddam's statue fell, he would likely agree with Howard Dean that our reasons for overthrowing Saddam were either misguided, superficial, or downright fraudulent.

But Kagan and Kristol thankfully bring us back within the proper historical context in order to evaluate whether the United States should have overthrown Saddam or not. Whether it is Clinton's "unholy axis" or Bush's "axis



of evil," it is abundantly clear that the nexus of WMD and terrorist networks has created one of the most terrifying threats the free world has ever faced. We can only hope that more wise men like Kagan and Kristol will step up against the face of the *New York Times*'s daily onslaught of "Niger uranium" minutiae and keep us focused on the big picture. Our future depends on it.

David Ellis
New York, NY

Touch of Evil

Noemie Emery's "The Out of Touch Party" (Oct. 20) reiterates a popular fallacy: that the 2000 Florida presidential election results were within a "margin of error." To make such a claim is statistically erroneous, for the following reasons: The term "margin of error" refers to the sort of random, quantifiable error associated with drawing inference from a random sample to a larger population. But an election is not a sample—its purpose is not to estimate the intent of the larger population.

And more importantly, if errors were made in the vote count, that sort of error is not quantifiable according to any statistical "margin of error." So while it may be attractive to try to understand the election in statistical terms, to do so is to use statistics improperly.

Patrick Peterson
Versailles, KY

Joan of Art

David Klinghoffer says he reads Joan Didion not for truth but for style ("Slouching Towards California," Oct. 20). I know that he means to praise Didion for her verbal adeptness. But in doing so he separates two inseparable terms.

Alfred North Whitehead once wrote that "style is the ultimate morality of mind." Judged against that standard, Didion's style is distorting and meretricious. The distortion of truth is not so much in what Didion says as in how she says it.

David Rankin
Torrance, CA

• • •

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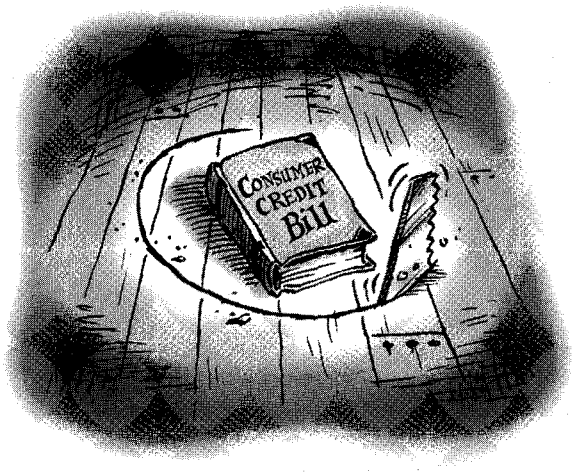

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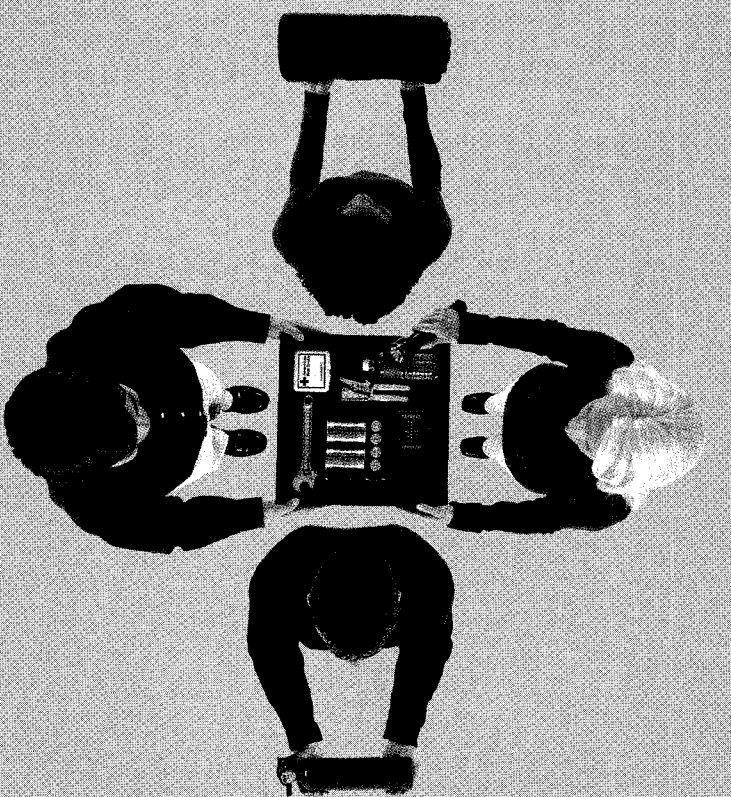

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By getting involved with your local Red Cross to prepare for the unexpected, you can strengthen your entire community. Begin by making a family disaster plan and assembling a disaster supplies kit. Or consider giving blood, volunteering, getting trained in lifesaving skills or even making a donation. When we come together, we become part of something bigger than us all. Learn how to prepare yourself, your family and your community today by contacting your local American Red Cross chapter or visiting **www.redcross.org**

American Red Cross

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Together, we can save a life

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the weekly Standard

The Patriot Act's Surprising Defenders

It was a tough and tricky crowd. When Joe Lieberman took the stage, on October 17, and politely reaffirmed his commitment to the security of a Jewish state in Israel, he was booed and heckled for it. Yet the next day, when it was his turn to address the Dearborn, Michigan, candidates' forum sponsored by James Zogby's Arab American Institute, Howard Dean went over like gangbusters. Not because his message on the Middle East was so much better received, mind you. Dean's condemnation of deliberate, violent assaults on civilian innocents—"the vast majority of Arab Americans and Arabs in general do not think that terrorism is appropriate, and we need to be clear about that"—fell noticeably flat, in fact, winning only "scattered applause," as the session's official transcript recounts. Dean's lusty attacks on the Bush administration, however, were a great deal more successful. Particularly when he went after the Justice Department for its implementation of domestic counterterrorism measures authorized by the USA Patriot Act of 2001, a law which is "shameful" and "morally wrong" and "unconstitutional." For this, Howard Dean got a standing ovation.

It never fails. Democrats running for office think attacking the Patriot Act is a winner. Wesley Clark, Dean's leading rival for the presidential nomination in every national poll, says the Patriot Act has "essentially suspended habeas corpus," and nobody seems to mind that Clark's charge is "essentially" baseless. Senator John Edwards says he's "horrified" by what the Patriot Act has wrought and wants a fair chunk of it canceled—this, barely two years after Edwards, along with every other Democratic senator but one, voted to enact the thing to begin with. Edwards, too, routinely denounces the Patriot Act for producing law enforcement "excesses" that, truth be told, long predate that law, lie far outside its purview, or are entirely imaginary. And Edwards, too, routinely gets standing ovations in the process.

So who'll defend the Patriot Act? Unfortunately, there's hardly a single Republican who can do the job effectively.

A fair number of Republicans don't *want* to defend the Patriot Act, of course. Patrick Leahy of Vermont—yet another Democratic senator who was only recently proud to vote yes on the question—now boasts that opposition to the law exists "across the political spectrum, from the far right to the far left." And he is right about that, though his inadvertently suggestive "far" speaks more to a certain irritable, anti-government reflex than to any coherent ideological impulse, conservative or liberal.

Former Republican congressman Bob Barr has lately joined forces with the ACLU to campaign against a Patriot Act ("Mr. Barr? Mr. Barr votes 'aye.'") that represents "an official step into the Brave New World of 1984." Longtime Republican activists Grover Norquist and David Keene are pleased to appear, with the likes of Alec Baldwin and People for the American Way's Ralph Neas, at anti-Patriot Act teach-ins. Pretty much the entire, all-Republican Idaho congressional delegation is now leading a forceful legislative charge to repeal certain key sections of the Patriot Act, and they are winning bipartisan support even from senators and representatives whose home states don't—yet—have a black helicopter problem.

Indeed, so low has the Patriot Act's reputation fallen that Marc Racicot, the chairman of President Bush's reelection campaign, is afraid to endorse it in public. "I'm not aware of any act, or any piece of legislation ever that has been undertaken by human beings, who are certainly subject to imperfections, that has ultimately ended up in a situation where it did not have to be refined," Racicot stuttered in response to an audience member's question during his own presentation to the Arab American Institute on October 17. His "expectation," Racicot offered, "although I certainly have not talked with the president about this issue," is that "refinements to that act . . . so that it does not end up invading the civil rights of any American [is] a cause that will be undertaken."

This will be news to Attorney General John Ashcroft, who for his part continues to stump the country hither and yon, giving speeches about the 150-plus terrorism convictions made possible only by the Patriot Act—about how federal agents, using investigative tools freshly granted to them by that law, have since disrupted terrorist cells in Buffalo, Seattle, Portland, and Detroit. And so on.

But here, alas, Ashcroft is engaged in what's probably a hopeless effort. For all practical political purposes, the poor

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man is no longer one of those imperfect human beings Marc Racicot talks about. Ashcroft, instead, has become a cartoon, as sometimes happens in our public life (think Dan Quayle). And the cartoon Ashcroft is "authoritarian"—and too "divisive" to persuade any but the already persuaded that "authoritarian" isn't quite the right word to apply to his Justice Department or to the Patriot Act the department is administering. It's gotten to the point where Ashcroft is automatically blamed for things he can't *possibly* have done. At a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the Patriot Act last week, the attorney general came under a shower of abuse for ducking an appearance even though, as committee chairman Orrin Hatch eventually pointed out, Ashcroft hadn't actually been invited.

Now, Orrin Hatch is a fine fellow, don't get us wrong. And he is not exactly alone; Ashcroft and the Patriot Act still enjoy broad Republican support on Capitol Hill. But party loyalists like Hatch are less than ideally situated to reassure America that the Bush administration's war on terrorism is other than a fascist plot. In an atmosphere of such intense suspicion, the arguments of party loyalists can only be sold at the deepest of discounts—insofar as they can be sold at all.

No, what the Patriot Act really needs are some Democratic defenders.

And, we're pleased to report, it now has two. They deserve a loud round of applause, and a great deal more publicity.

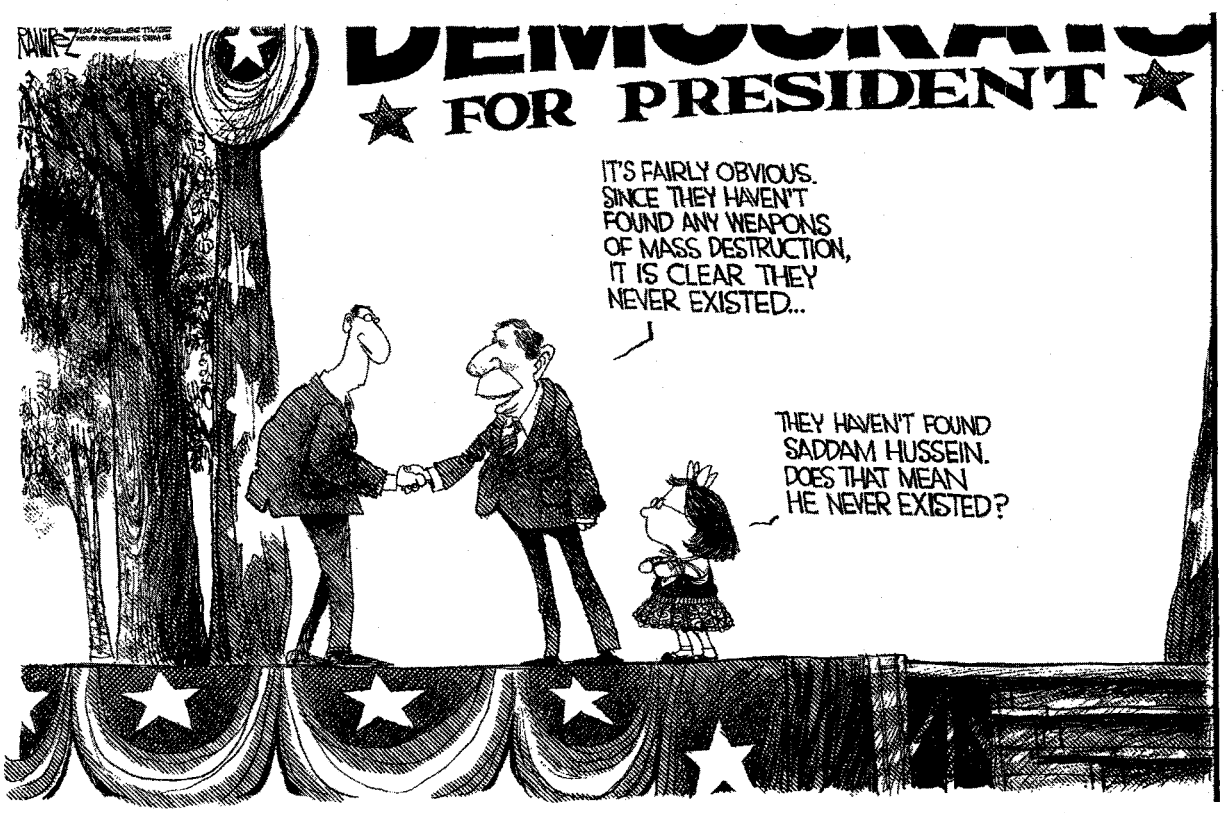
At last week's Senate hearing, Joe Biden of Delaware didn't have to say that "the tide of criticism" being directed against the Patriot Act "is both misinformed and overblown," that "I stand by my support" of that law, and that the Ashcroft Justice Department has "done a pretty good job in terms of implementing" the law's provisions. But Biden did say all these things, anyway. And California's Dianne Feinstein went further still, in a stern and lengthy lecture about the concrete reality of U.S. anti-terrorism law—as opposed to the paranoiac fantasy version now being circulated throughout the land by the likes of Bob Barr and Howard Dean. How's about we concentrate on some facts, Feinstein suggested.

"I've tried to see what has happened in the complaints that have come in," she said, "and I've received to date 21,434 complaints about the Patriot Act." Except these turned out to be unrelated civil liberties gripes, or complaints about a "Patriot Act II" that doesn't yet exist. "I have never had a single [verified] abuse of the Patriot Act reported to me. My staff emailed the ACLU and asked them for instances of actual abuses. They emailed back and said they had none."

The widespread hullabaloo over the Patriot Act, Senator Feinstein concluded, proceeds from "substantial uncertainty . . . about what this bill actually does do." And "perhaps some ignorance," she added.

We'd challenge that "perhaps" part. Otherwise, we're with Dianne Feinstein a hundred percent. Wonders never cease.

—David Tell, for the Editors



Michael Ramirez

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Al Qaeda's New Base

Osama bin Laden's men are operating in eastern Iran. What are we doing about it? BY JEFFREY BELL

AT A TIME when even nuances of Iraq reconstruction policy become flashpoints for bureaucratic infighting, causing competing leaks to spring from almost every precinct of the administration's foreign policy apparatus, the most consequential policy struggle of all is playing out in virtual silence. That is the debate over what to do about the fact that, for the first time since the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001, major elements of al Qaeda seem to have acquired a new home. The address is eastern Iran.

This fact, and the nature of the debate surrounding it, was revealed in a thoroughly reported front-page article by Douglas Farah and Dana Priest in the October 14 *Washington Post*. According to a consensus of American, European, and Arab intelligence officials, the article said, the "upper echelon" of al Qaeda—including a favored older son of Osama bin Laden and the group's de facto secretary of war and secretary of the treasury—"is managing the terrorist organization from Iran."

The intelligence agencies, said the *Post*, have known about the relocation at least since May, when it was learned that the May 12 Riyadh suicide bombing that killed 35 people, including eight Americans, was conceived, planned, and ordered by high al Qaeda officials in eastern Iran. Around the same time, Saad bin Laden, Osama's son and heir apparent, operating from Iran, was linked to the May 16 bombings that left 45 dead in faraway Casablanca, Morocco.

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This information vindicates George W. Bush's analysis of the war on terrorism. At each major decision point since 9/11, the president has pressed for an aggressive, comprehensive view of the enemy and of the moves needed to bring him down. He views the enemy as implacable, protean, and resourceful, bringing together diverse, seemingly contradictory elements that cross national and sectarian barriers to be united by one thing: hatred of the United States and a desire to weaken decisively our role in the world. Interestingly, the *Post* reports that the architect of the supposedly shocking link between the Shiite and Sunni wings of Islamism was Hezbollah strongman Imad Mugniyah, a Lebanese national responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans going back to the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983.

Elements of the U.S. government do not want to hold Iran accountable for allowing al Qaeda to establish its new headquarters there.

Above all, the linkup between Iran and al Qaeda supports what could be seen as the core premise of Bush war strategy: the pivotal role of anti-American rogue states—the "axis of evil"—in making it possible for the enemy to accomplish the mass murder of Americans and anyone who stands in the way of bringing this about. Surely it is no accident, in the analysis of the Bush White House, that a surge in al Qaeda activity and visibility coincides with its high command obtaining a new, more secure base. And what better host could al Qaeda have than a well-armed, well-financed Islamist government racing to obtain the nuclear weapons al Qaeda has never made any secret of wanting to use against America and its friends?

What to do? As with other major decision points since 9/11, the current debate is between the aggressive, comprehensive war strategy of the president and some of his top aides, and the cautious, incremental view of many of the military, intelligence, and diplomatic officials responsible for carrying it out. These officials tend to see most issues raised by the war as discrete and separable. Their views have a veneer of expertise and sophistication. Sunnis are not Shiites, they point out. Arabs are not Persians. Governments are not terrorist movements. Islamists don't like secularists. All very true, and yet Islamist warriors are today infiltrating into Iraq to fight side-by-side with Baath restorationists.

So, elements of the U.S. government, and of other governments, do not want to hold Iran accountable for allowing al Qaeda to establish a new global headquarters within its borders. So, the Saudis pursue diplomatic channels demanding extradition of the al Qaeda commanders, while our State Department delivers protests to Iran's utterly powerless president, Mohammad Khatami. Needless to say, these efforts get nowhere, and the excuse given is that the Jerusalem Force, the branch of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps tasked with sheltering the al Qaeda high command, is said to be somewhat independent of the rest of the Iranian government. Meanwhile, the State Department is described by the *Post* as "eager to renew talks with Iran on a variety of issues."

Amazingly, this polite, bureaucratic approach is supported by many of the same people who said, more than

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two years ago, that we needed a polite, bureaucratic approach in Afghanistan. The argument always had elements of truth: Al Qaeda *was* somewhat independent of the Taliban, after all. In the end, of course, these interesting but diversionary arguments were swept aside when President Bush ordered a full-scale air bombardment on the Taliban units defending Kabul. But while the U.S. military and State Department agonized over how soon and how thoroughly to bomb the forward positions of the Taliban's army, and how challenging it was going to be for the Northern Alliance to represent Pashtun tribal interests in the event of a swift military victory, precious days were wasted and al Qaeda commanders found plenty of time to escape.

Today, as always, the most effective ally of what could be called "micro" thinking is sheer bureaucratic inertia and risk-averseness. How, it is being asked, can we even think about what is happening in eastern Iran when we have our hands full in Iraq and Afghanistan?

It would be foolish, of course, to minimize either the difficulties, or the paramount importance, of bringing peace and self-government to post-invasion Iraq and Afghanistan. But it would be at least equally foolish to minimize the danger to these efforts posed by a reconstituted and revitalized al Qaeda, newly headquartered in the Islamist rogue state that sits between Iraq and Afghanistan.

So, a central premise of the Bush war strategy is once again front and center. The president has repeatedly argued that the nexus between Islamist terror and potentially nuclear-armed rogue states poses the gravest of all dangers to the American people and their safety. If his past performance is any guide, the president will soon turn up diplomatic, political, and—if necessary—military pressure on the Iranian mullahs to break this nexus. One hopes this will happen soon, because what we've learned about al Qaeda's presence in eastern Iran suggests time is in short supply. ♦

Osama's Best Friend

The further connections between al Qaeda and Saddam. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

IN A LITTLE-NOTICED DECISION in a New York courtroom on September 25, 2003, a man described as Osama bin Laden's "best friend" got some good news. U.S. District Court Judge Deborah Batts ruled that Mahmdouh Mahmud Salim could not be sentenced to life in prison.

Salim—who was present at the founding of al Qaeda in 1989 and who was for years one of bin Laden's most trusted confidants—had been captured in Germany in 1998 and extradited to the United States for prosecution related to his role in the grand conspiracy that resulted in the 1998 bombings at U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya. The bombings killed 224 people and injured more than 5,000.

But the proceedings in September had little to do with those attacks. Salim was answering for a simpler crime. On November 1, 2000, he squirted hot sauce in the face of Louis Pepe, a guard at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York City. Salim had sharpened one end of a plastic comb into a makeshift dagger that, after stunning Pepe with the fiery liquid, he thrust nearly three inches into the guard's eye socket. Pepe survived, barely, but today lives with severe brain damage and, obviously, without sight in that eye. Prosecutors tried to argue that Salim's attack was part of a larger plot that amounted to an act of terrorism. The judge was dubious. Salim will likely serve between 17 and 21 years in prison for the attack. And he may yet be tried for his role in the 1998 embassy bombings.

So who is Mahmdouh Mahmud Salim? He served al Qaeda in a wide variety of roles. He was a financier. He was a religious leader. He was a technology wizard. Most important, perhaps, was Salim's work as an emissary and a weapons procurer. Those last two responsibilities are the ones that most interest U.S. intelligence officials.

Salim, you see, is also known as Abu Hajer al Iraqi ("the Iraqi"). According to Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin, two Clinton administration National Security Council appointees who wrote *The Sacred Age of Terror*, Abu Hajer oversaw al Qaeda's efforts to produce and obtain weapons of mass destruction. Not coincidentally, say Bush administration officials familiar with intelligence reporting on Abu Hajer, he was one of the few deputies bin Laden trusted to maintain his relationship with Saddam Hussein throughout much of the 1990s.

Without naming him, CIA director George Tenet discussed intelligence on Abu Hajer in a letter to Senator Bob Graham dated October 7, 2002. "We have solid reporting of senior level contact between Iraq and al Qaeda going back a decade. Credible information exists that Iraq and al Qaeda have discussed safe haven and reciprocal nonaggression. . . . We have credible reporting that al Qaeda leaders sought contacts in Iraq who could help them acquire WMD capabilities." U.S. officials now believe that Abu Hajer al Iraqi helped bin Laden negotiate a nonaggression pact with Saddam in 1993.

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Some of the intelligence on Abu Hajer al Iraqi's role in WMD procurement came from the trial of four other al Qaeda members who planned the embassy bombings. A former al Qaeda member testifying for the prosecution, Jamal Ahmed al Fadl, told the court how he met Abu Hajer and bin Laden in 1989, and that he accompanied Abu Hajer in 1993 and 1994 on trips to Khartoum, Sudan, where the Iraqi native took him to a facility used to produce chemical weapons. It was al Fadl who labeled Abu Hajer the "best friend" of bin Laden.

The Treasury Department, as it examines al Qaeda's financial network, has come across the name Abu Hajer al Iraqi on numerous occasions. Published reports claim that he shared a bank account in Hamburg, Germany, with a man thought to have provided financing to three of the September 11 hijackers. His name has also been found on documents obtained by U.S. officials investigating Islamic charities and phony businesses believed to be al Qaeda front groups.

The more authorities learn about the Iraqi al Qaeda leader, the more questions they have. Perhaps the first one they would ask, were Abu Hajer the kind of prisoner willing to talk rather than the kind of prisoner who gouges out his captors' eyes, is this: Who is Ahmad Hikmat Shakir? And the second: Why were your name and contact information found in his apartment shortly after the attacks on September 11, 2001?

Shakir is another native Iraqi. And he, too, has worked closely with numerous high-ranking al Qaeda terrorists, including two of the chief 9/11 hijackers. But despite being detained twice in the months after 9/11, Shakir is not in custody.

In August 1999, according to a classified CIA report, Shakir was offered a job as "a facilitator" at the airport in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as this magazine has reported before. A facilitator, or greeter, is someone who escorts VIPs through customs and immigration control checkpoints. At some point that fall, Shakir began working for Malaysian Airlines. If Malaysian Airlines issued his paychecks, it did not control his schedule. For instructions on when to report to work and when to take a day off, Shakir looked to the Iraqi Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. That made some sense. A contact at the Iraqi Embassy had gotten Shakir his airport job in the first place.

That Iraqi contact told Shakir to report to work on January 5, 2000. He did. There are pictures to prove it. On that day, Shakir facilitated for Khalid al Midhar and Nawaz al Hamzi. But then, after helping the men through the airport, he got into the waiting car with them and sped off to the Kuala Lumpur Hotel. U.S. intelligence officials don't know whether Shakir joined the two in their ensuing activities. They do know that airport facilitators don't typically leave with terrorists.

The Treasury Department, as it examines al Qaeda's financial network, has come across the name Abu Hajer al Iraqi on numerous occasions.

Al Midhar and al Hamzi were in Malaysia for an important meeting, an al Qaeda gathering U.S. officials now believe was one of the key planning sessions for both the USS *Cole* bombing and the September 11 attacks. Two of the masterminds of those plots—Tawfiz al Atash and Ramzi bin al Shibh, respectively—were present. The meeting ended on January 8, 2000. Shakir reported to work at the airport on January 9 and January 10. He never showed up again.

Khalid al Midhar and Nawaz al Hamzi flew from Bangkok, Thailand, to Los Angeles on January 15, 2000. On September 11, 2001, the two men were at the controls of American Airlines Flight 77 when it plunged into the outer ring of the Pentagon.

Six days after the Pentagon and World Trade Center attacks, Ahmad Hikmat Shakir was detained in Doha, Qatar, where he had resurfaced as an employee of the Qatari government's Ministry of Religious Development. Authorities searched Shakir and his apartment and were stunned by what they found: The Iraqi had contact information for Islamic radicals involved in many of the most devastating terrorist attacks of the past decade. These contacts included:

* *Musab Yasin* and *Ibrahim Suleiman* from the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. At the time of that attack, Yasin lived in New Jersey with his brother, Abdul Rahman Yasin. Abdul Rahman Yasin, who badly burned his leg while mixing the chemicals for the World Trade Center bomb, was interviewed by the FBI and, in a costly mistake, released. After it realized its error, the FBI placed him on the list of "Most Wanted" terrorists. But they were too late. Abdul Rahman Yasin had fled the United States for Iraq, where U.S. intelligence officials believe he remains today. Ibrahim Suleiman was a Kuwaiti native whose fingerprints were found on the bomb-making manuals authorities determined were used in planning the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

* *Zahid Sheikh Mohammed*, brother of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the September 11 mastermind. Zahid Sheikh Mohammed and his brother are both believed to have planned "Operation Bojinka," the 1995 al Qaeda plot to explode simultaneously 12 airplanes over the Pacific Ocean. U.S. intelligence officials believe that aborted plot may have morphed into the September 11 attacks.

* *Ammar al Baluchi*, the nephew of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. Accord-

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ing to a report in *Time* magazine, al Baluchi provided $120,000 to Mohammed Atta and his fellow hijackers. Intelligence officials believe al Baluchi may have had a role in planning the attack on the USS *Cole* in October 2000.

* And, of course, *Abu Hajer al Iraqi*, the prison-guard gouger, who is suspected of involvement in several of these attacks as well as the 1998 embassy bombings. (The telephone number Shakir had for Abu Hajer was actually a number for Taba Investments, a well-known al Qaeda front.)

Despite this wealth of information, the Qataris released Shakir, the Iraqi airport facilitator, shortly after they detained him. He wasn't free for long. On October 21, 2001, Shakir flew from Doha to Amman, Jordan, where he was scheduled to transfer to a flight to Baghdad. He was arrested by Jordanian intelligence and held for three months without charge. CIA officials who questioned him concluded that Shakir was well-trained in counter-interrogation techniques. (One administration official points out that Shakir's counter-interrogation training appears to have been much more sophisticated than that of al Qaeda detainees being held at Guantanamo, a detail that, if true, may indicate that his instruction came from a government intelligence service.)

Not long after Shakir was detained, the Iraqi government began pressuring Jordanian intelligence for his release. Why exactly Shakir was discharged is unclear. In the period after the September 11 attacks, the Jordanian government was highly cooperative. It seems unlikely that they would release Shakir against the wishes of the U.S. government, especially at a time when the Bush administration was intensifying its rhetoric on Iraq. Nonetheless, Shakir was released on January 28, 2002, one day before President Bush focused world attention on Iraq as part of the "Axis of Evil" in his State of the Union address. U.S. intelligence officials believe Shakir quickly returned to Baghdad.

The evidence on Shakir, circumstantial at this point, seems to suggest a long relationship with senior al Qaeda operatives. What is less clear is Shakir's relationship—if any—to the deposed Iraqi regime. Many aspects of his story could be explained as mere coincidence. But three details make the most sense if one assumes the involvement of Iraqi intelligence: (1) the fact that an Iraqi embassy employee got him his airport job and controlled his schedule, (2) his extensive training in counter-interrogation, and (3) the fact that the Iraqi government was eager—by some accounts desperate—to get him out of Jordanian custody and back to Iraq.

There remain exponentially more questions than answers concerning Saddam Hussein's relationship to al Qaeda. Among them, it is a mere matter of detail to know why a native Iraqi, thanks to a contact in the Iraqi embassy, was in a position to escort two September 11 hijackers to a critical planning meeting, or why he possessed contact information for Osama bin Laden's "best friend." But the overarching fact—that Saddam and al Qaeda had a relationship—can no longer be seriously disputed. ♦

Onward, Christian Soldier!

The jihad against General Boykin.

BY DAVID GELERNTER

LIEUTENANT GENERAL William Boykin, deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence and a highly decorated officer, has intimated that the United States is a Christian country and that he is, himself, a Christian. Journalists across the nation are shocked and horrified. Apparently the general has been traveling around the country speaking in churches, and has gone so far as to suggest that all religions are *not* equivalent and that, while he relies on his own God, the one bloody-minded terrorists praise and celebrate must be a different and a false one. Naturally he has apologized (to "those who have been offended by my statements") and promised never to do it again. But Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has made things worse by refusing to kick Boykin when he is down, and by adding such weird, unaccountable pronouncements of his own as, "That's the way we live. We're a free people." At this point, the world's hyperventilating pundits need time to compose themselves. While they are resting, here are a few simple, healing truths about which we can all agree. (Pretty much.)

Of course the United States is a Christian country. In fact it is a baseball-loving Christian country. Which doesn't mean that *everyone* is a Christian or loves baseball. Which doesn't empower the government to establish a national baseball team or force non-Christians to be baptized. It is just a statement of fact.

It is also a statement of principle. The essence of conservatism is to build our future in harmony with our past. (It is a moral, intellectual, and artistic principle: Naturally the struc-

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ture must grow and is always growing, but in what style?) The Founding Fathers made clear that they wanted the federal government *out* of the religion business. No federal functionary (and no wiseacre journalist) had the right to dictate anyone's religious beliefs, or force him to keep quiet should he choose to express them.

Some journalists are all in favor of General Boykin's right to say and believe what he chooses—so long as Secretary Rumsfeld fires him. They are working under the theory that it is unacceptable for a DoD official to say that Christianity is true and that other religions are, therefore, false. The general also stands accused of calling for a Christian "jihad"—but he never used that word, and the accusation has long since been exposed as phony. *And* Boykin has been accused of casting aspersions on Islam—Heaven forbid! (What prigs we should all feel, after Islam has been so sweet to us.)

William Boykin

Getty / U.S. Army

Of course there is no justification for insulting people gratuitously; but clearly that was not the general's intention. And clearly, too, religion ain't beanbag. If you believe in one, ordinarily that entails disbelieving in the others. Muslims are familiar with the principle. Some journalists are not. But it's not so strange; the same thing usually holds for philosophical, scientific, artistic, and political "religions."

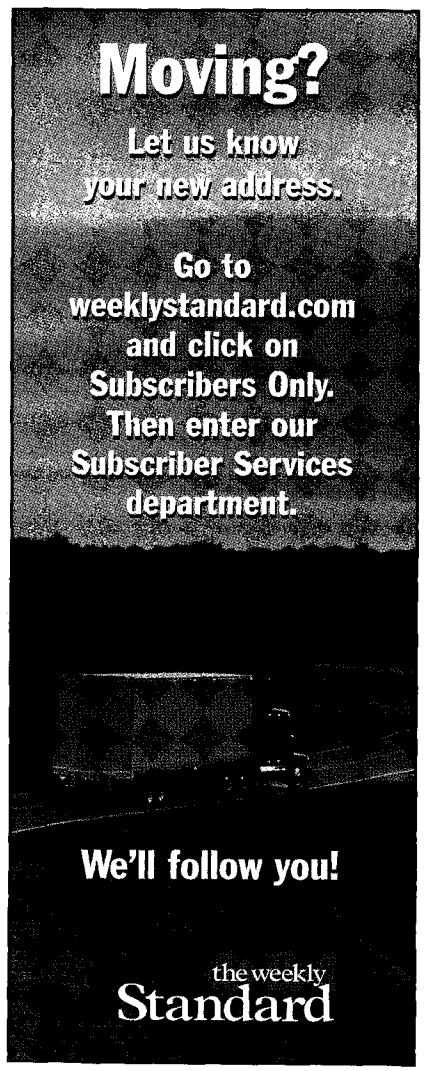
It used to be accepted in America that it was a Christian's right to believe in Christianity and to say so in public. The right even applied to soldiers—in fact to highly placed ones. In the Order for Sabbath Observance of November 1862, Lincoln quoted to his army George Washington's own first general order following the Declaration of Independence: "The General hopes and trusts that every officer and man will endeavor to live and act as becomes a Christian soldier defending the dearest rights and liberties of his country."

So the "offended" to whom General Boykin apologized can hardly claim that we sprang religion on them out of nowhere. The Judeo-Christian strain in the sacred documents of this country is too formidable to ignore. America's mission as Lincoln defined it is to act with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right. He spoke for America's better self, and still does. (Lincoln said that he wished to be a "humble instrument in the hands of the Almighty." He said, "Whatever shall appear to be God's will I will do.")

But, some people argue, that was long ago. Demographics and beliefs have changed. We have changed our minds about religion.

Says who? Since when? Of course this is no longer the almost exclusively Christian nation it was in 1776. But does anyone doubt that it remains an overwhelmingly Christian nation nonetheless? We are solemnly warned that, nowadays, public expressions of Christianity are "controversial." Among whom? Look up "controversial" and you will find that "upsetting to the *Los Angeles Times*" is not the definition.

Granted, ours is the Offended Age. All right, I'm offended. (Might as well get with the program.) As a practicing Jew I am offended when Jews all over the country pop up to denounce angrily some hapless truth-teller who says what is obvious, that this is a Christian country. (The angry denouncers are by no means only, not even *mostly* Jews—but the Jewish contingent is of special interest to me.) The Constitution confers on Jews and Christians equally the right to behave as if they believed in Judaism and Christianity respectively. Christianity is (at any rate) a variant of Judaism, formed on a Jewish armature; the work of Jews, propagated by Jews, focused on Jews. When Jesus is asked by a "certain lawyer" how one might deserve eternal life (Luke 10:25), the two Christian fundamentals that emerge are each verses from the Hebrew Bible—the Bible Jesus knew. By erecting and maintaining America on Christian principles, Christians have tendered Jews the deepest of compliments. Why not accept it in that spirit? ♦



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The Malays' Malaise

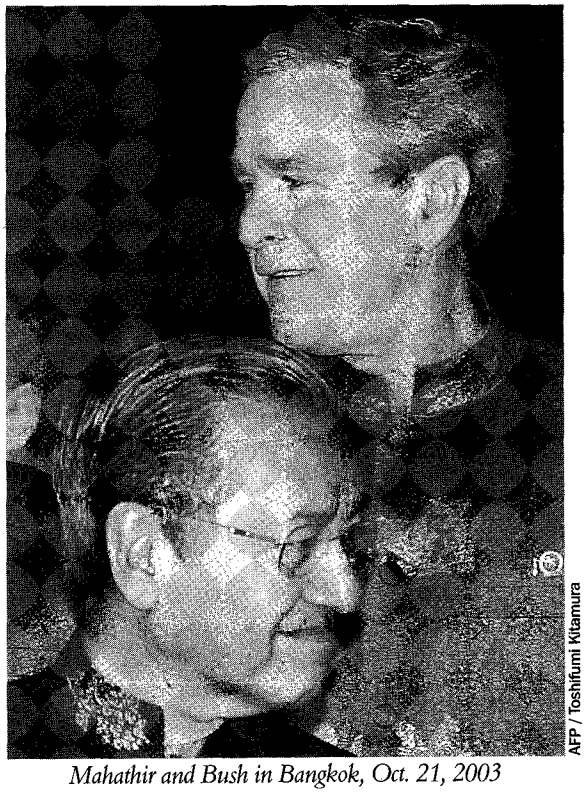
The challenges after Mahathir.

BY DAVID DEVOSS

ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON, October 31, a low-key ceremony is to take place on the fourth floor of a pastel-pink palace in the new Malaysian capital of Putrajaya. In the privacy of his inner chambers, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad will hand over his "job manual"—a largely symbolic binder of documents—to Abdullah Badawi, his deputy prime minister. Sporting the drab, long-sleeved safari suits the two wear around the building, they will shake hands and say goodbye. Then Mahathir will stroll across the marble floor, place his thumb on the biomechanical security lock on the front door, and leave Malaysia in the care of its first new prime minister in 22 years.

The retirement of the 77-year-old Mahathir, whose political tenure ranks third in the world behind that of Fidel Castro and Robert Mugabe, will initiate a period of uncertainty, not only for Malaysia, but also for Washington and its war on terrorism.

Under Mahathir, Malaysia has become the most stable, prosperous, and democratic country in the Islamic world. While most Muslim countries are ruled by theocrats, autocratic dynasties, or the military, Malaysia's 22 million people live in a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarch. Though the majority of the population consists of Malay Muslims, the ruling National Front coalition also includes political parties that represent Chinese and Indian interests. In Malaysia, women hold positions of influence in all the professions and wear scarves only to accessorize. On Friday afternoons, mosques in Penang, Johor, and Kuala Lumpur are packed, but so are hotel bars and taverns.



AFP / Toshifumi Kitamura

Mahathir and Bush in Bangkok, Oct. 21, 2003

Back in 1981, when Mahathir came to power, Malaysia largely was a rural backwater dependent on the export of rubber, petroleum, tin, and palm oil. Today it has a GDP of $210 billion, a world-class telephone system, the region's best railroads, highways equal to any U.S. Interstate, and the third highest per capita income in Southeast Asia after Brunei and Singapore. Major investments by Microsoft and other IT companies have given the country a strong middle class and made it America's tenth largest trading partner.

Still, there is cause for worry. The son of an Islamic cleric whose academic training also is rooted in Islamic studies, Badawi is a colorless bureaucrat who comes to power at a time when Muslims throughout the region are questioning the nature of their religion and its role in government. Badawi clearly wants to be a transformational leader, not a 62-year-old bureaucrat who only serves a transitional role. But he has little room for maneuver. Support for al Qaeda runs deep among pockets of Malays, who constitute 58 percent of the population. Many of the leaders of Jemaah Islamiyah (Islamic Community), the terrorist organization behind the recent bombings in Indonesia and the Philippines, went to school in Malaysia or are themselves Malay. More alarming is the fact that in the last national election, 65 percent of the Malays who went to the polls voted for fundamentalist candidates belonging to the Pan-Malaysian Islamic party (PAS).

How did Mahathir for more than two decades keep devout Muslims happy while maintaining an atmosphere conducive to Western investment? By constantly tacking between the two constituencies. He respected the heritage of the country's sultans, but limited their authority in all but religious matters. He allowed Muslim fundamentalists to contest elections, but arrested and detained without trial those who advocated change by anything other than legal means. He constantly championed the rights of Malays, but always insured that the country's Chinese and Hindu communities got their fair share of the economic pie.

East-West News Service editor David DeVoss covered Mahathir Mohamad's rise to power as a Time *magazine correspondent in Southeast Asia.*

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At the international level, Malaysian diplomacy is intricately balanced. After the World Trade Center attack, Mahathir was among the first world leaders to denounce al Qaeda and support America's war on terrorism. Washington was so pleased with Malaysia's response that it selected Kuala Lumpur as the location for the U.S.-funded Southeast Asia Regional Center for Counter Terrorism. But the relationship has cooled significantly since the invasion of Iraq, a misadventure Mahathir repeatedly has denounced as a senseless war on a country not involved in 9/11 or the spread of global terrorism.

To his credit, Mahathir has been equally critical of Islamic radicals who regard scientific and industrial development as secular evils. "Our salvation will not be achieved by Muslim scholars who believe there is merit only in studying religion," Mahathir recently told a meeting of Islamic leaders. "We accord no merit to people who study science, mathematics, and engineering. Nor are the people who industrialize and enrich a country given any consideration. Yet all these people help strengthen the Muslim *ummah* [Islamic community] and prevent them from being humiliated the way they are now."

This willingness to stand up to the West, while confronting embarrassing flaws in Islamic societies, has made Malaysia a leader in the developing world. It heads the nonaligned movement, an organization of 116 nations, and this year hosted the Organization of the Islamic Conference. The country's diplomatic corps contains as many Chinese and Indians as it does Malays. This multiethnic mix makes the country a trusted friend of China, which worries about Xinjiang's Muslim Uighurs, and a close ally to India, whose Muslim population of 130 million ranks second in size only to that of Indonesia.

Until recently, this ability to act as an honest broker has made Mahathir the leading candidate to become chairman of the OIC following this week's retirement from government service. But his recent assertion that "Europeans killed 6 million Jews out of 12 million, but today the Jews rule the world by proxy" may have made Mahathir too controversial for even the OIC. The comments certainly tarnished Mahathir in the eyes of the Bush administration, which issued an immediate and altogether appropriate rebuke.

Mahathir is no friend of Israel. He repeatedly denounces Jews for their occupation of Palestine and supposed manipulation of international currency markets. He says the IMF and WTO are instruments created to serve Jewish financial interests. Several years ago, he allowed distribution of a book called *The International Jew*, an anti-Semitic screed.

In between intemperate statements, however, Mahathir has closed religious schools he believes to be seedbeds for terrorism and prevented the fundamentalist PAS from imposing *hudud* (Islamic criminal law) in the two Malaysian states it presently controls. After spending time in a country where beer, pork chops, and Madonna CDs exist alongside minarets and mosques, one is left with the notion that perhaps vocal anti-Semitism is part of the cost of doing business in a Muslim country.

Abdullah Badawi will confront a number of issues the moment he becomes prime minister, not the least of which is whether to release Anwar Ibrahim, the former deputy prime minister and heir apparent whom Mahathir arrested four years ago on specious charges and continues to keep in prison. Breaking the pattern of cronyism and corruption resulting from government meddling in economic development will be difficult. And keeping the lid on political Islam may be impossible if Badawi also restores a measure of press freedom. Badawi has vowed to rescue Malaysia from the "malaise of its First World Infrastructure, Third World Mentality" that was the hallmark of the Mahathir era. It may be the hardest challenge of all. ♦

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The Mauritanian Candidate

Muslim, pro-American, and running for reelection. BY ROGER KAPLAN

AMERICANS learned from Afghanistan that neglect of impoverished, out-of-the-way places can be costly. This is especially true of Islamic Africa—where Osama bin Laden has been known to take refuge and in whose vicinity his followers have found both recruits and targets for their bombs. So it is worth keeping an eye on the likes of Mauritania—never mind the desert vastness of a country more than twice the size of California with only as many inhabitants as Chicago. Mauritania has an unusual, pro-American president, and he's up for reelection on November 7.

Just how unusual Maaouya Ould Taya is can be measured in his response to last summer's attempted coup—hardly the response of a typical regional strongman. A 62-year-old former army officer who himself seized power in a bloodless coup in 1984, President Taya was on the defensive in the months leading up to the clash. His recognition of Israel in 1999—making Mauritania the third Arab League nation to establish diplomatic ties, after Egypt and Jordan—and his signing on to the war on terror were widely unpopular, and his program of political reforms was considered too cautious in some quarters, in others too bold.

On June 8, some army officers disgruntled with the boss's reform policies and nursing personal and tribal grievances overran the presidential compound in the capital, Nouakchott. Rallying his personal guard and loosening his tie, Taya shot his way out of the trap and dug in a few blocks away, at police headquarters. He sustained a 36-hour siege against an elite tank battalion, until the main army corps arrived and overwhelmed the mutineers.

Courage under fire is not an attribute of the pampered kleptocrat. Taya, who was born in a tent and never saw indoor plumbing until he attended advanced military school in France, is personally incorruptible, even if some in his entourage have taken advantage of their positions. The remarkable thing is that, though *le putsch*, as it is known, gave him every excuse to clear unwanted debris and announce, in effect, "No more Mr. Nice Guy," President Taya has stuck to his reformist guns.

Far from canceling the upcoming election, he'll face a field of vigorous challengers—none of whom has defended the coup. Responding in kind, Taya has left all who stay within the constitutional framework free to be as anti-American and anti-Israel as they want. This includes about 60 leaders of various Islamist currents whom Taya jailed briefly last spring and summer on suspicion of subversive activities. Mauritania enjoys political pluralism, though as in many Islamic countries the constitution bans openly religious or tribal parties. The conditions under which previous elections were held always gave rise to protest by opposition leaders.

The domestic issues the country faces have to do with development, of course, but also with the country's three population groups. At the top of the heap are the "white Moors," or *bedayin*, of Arab extraction and economically and politically dominant since the French empire retreated in the late 1950s. Warriors and merchants—they led the historic trans-Sahara commerce—they are scholars as well. Their breathtaking desert city of Chinguetti, with its ancient libraries and priceless manuscripts, is one of the treasures of Islamic culture.

Another third are the "black Moors," or *haratine*, former slaves of the first group, who can be compared, without stretching things too much, to black Americans in the period just after segregation was outlawed. Legally equal to the *bedayin*, the *haratine* are functionally a lower class that carries the additional burden of a heritage of humiliation. But they are in many respects the coming class in Mauritania. Upwardly mobile, with an edge of anger, their population increasing faster than the other groups', they must be integrated into the political and economic system if the country is not to head into class war. Racially and culturally, the *haratine* and the *bedayin* are the same people. The poorer members of the family are now asking for their share.

Finally, there are several subgroups of black Africans—principally the Sonike, Wolof, and Pular peoples of the Senegal river valley, whose ancestral affinities lie in Senegal and Chad, while the Moors' are in the Sahara and Arab North Africa. Just as Islamic as the Moors, the black Africans have a different tradition of slavery, internal to the tribe and closer to what we would call indentured servitude but far more entrenched than the archaic Moorish system, which in effect was subverted by the ongoing 30-year drought that has destroyed the Moors' traditional desert economy.

Ironically, the human rights activists' alarums about Mauritania's "slavery problem" all have to do with the *haratine*, whose situation is evolving neither more nor less haltingly than African Americans' position did in the post-civil rights period. The activists tend to ignore the persistent and unchanging functional slavery found in the Senegal river valley.

Against this backdrop, President

Roger Kaplan is a writer in New York.

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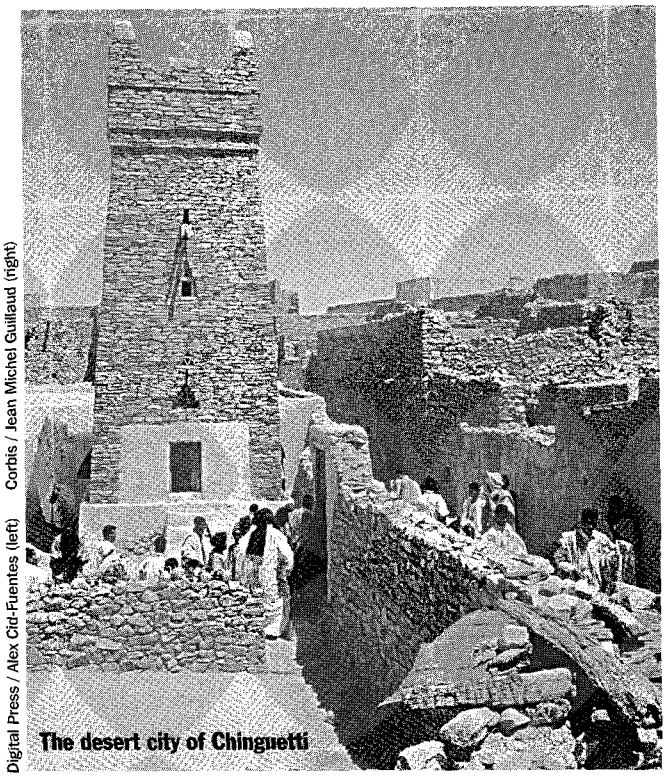
Maaouya Ould Taya

Digital Press / Alex Cid-Fuentes (left)



The desert city of Chinguetti

Corbis / Jean Michel Guillaud (right)

Taya wants to go down as the Moor who took Mauritania into modernity. While a majority of its people still live on a dollar a day, Mauritania's economy has grown steadily under Taya, the drought notwithstanding. And oil is arriving soon, according to the Australian prospectors who have found substantial offshore deposits. If it does, the issue of managing sudden riches could become more critical than that of managing persistent poverty. "We've put in place one of the most investment-friendly regimes in this part of the world," a businessman tells me. "And if Taya stays on course, we are arguably the most favorable port of entry to the whole region."

Skeptical observers respond that the government does not understand the meaning of opportunity, and that wealth remains concentrated in a small circle. Yet the *haratine* prime minister, a longstanding Taya opponent named Sghair Ould M'Barek, who only this year decided to try joining 'em instead of fighting 'em, insists that poverty-eradication is possible and depends on economic growth rather than redistribution. This too is a rather original approach in an oil-producing country in the Third World.

"Taya is a modernizer," says Moussa Ould Hamed, editor of *Le Calame*, a local French-language weekly. "He is also out on a limb, in the sense that he wants to integrate the *haratine* and he is adamant on his foreign policy, like a convert." The reference is to the fact that until the early 1990s, Taya was an Arab-nation man, entertaining good relations with Saddam Hussein. "In a sense, he has no choice but to go forward. The question is how he can manage this, and how much change our society can tolerate."

Many in Mauritania agree on the desirability of change, but what they mean by it varies. Policies, like ideas, have consequences, and signing on for the anti-terror war has brought not only U.S. military assistance but also training and upgrading opportunities that young officers may appreciate. (The would-be *putschists* were trained in Saudi Arabia and spoke no English.) A high-level Western diplomat says U.S. military assistance cannot go unnoticed in a country where everybody knows everybody. "They will soon see there are benefits," this source says. "But so will the United States benefit from being here: Keep in mind that if you are not watching, before you know it the bad guys can buy a place like this—that's what they did in Afghanistan."

Every candidate against him in the November election has stated that reversing Taya's pro-West foreign policy is the first order of business. Prominent among the eight registered candidates are Mohamed Khouna Ould Haidalla, a *bedayin* hard-liner distrustful of Taya's reforms, and Messaoud Ould Boulkheir, who is demanding the functional equivalent of affirmative action for the *haratines*. Also noteworthy is the presence of a woman candidate, Aïcha Mint Jeddane. Women's emergence in recent years as more active players in politics and business may be due to the Taya regime's encouragement, or it may be a result of the inevitable flow of things.

At present, pundits are predicting a victory for Ould Taya. If the election is demonstrably free and fair, and Taya, win or lose, abides by its results, his record as a modernizer will be secure. Now or in the near future, a peaceful transfer of power from a longtime incumbent to an elected successor will vindicate Ould Taya's model of regime change by gradual reform and set a welcome example for Muslim Africa. ♦

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Socialism in Every City

The spread of the "living wage."

BY WILLIAM TUCKER

THE "LIVING WAGE" movement has become the latest effort to impose socialism on the United States, one city at a time. After a slow beginning in the 1990s, living wage ordinances—which impose minimum wages much higher than the federal one—have now been adopted in over 100 municipalities, from Somerville, Mass., to Portland, Oregon, from Minneapolis to San Antonio. Cities as large as New York, Boston, Chicago, St. Louis, and Denver have adopted living wages, as well as towns and villages as small as Taylor, Mich., Bellingham, Wash., Oyster Bay, N.Y., Lakewood, Ohio, and Port Hueneme, Calif.

In major urban centers, the effort is often spearheaded by radical city council members who otherwise spend their time raising taxes and condemning the war in Iraq. But upscale suburbs like Alexandria and Arlington County, Va., have adopted living wage ordinances, as have Tucson, Ariz., and Missoula, Mont.

"Most of the people who testified were immigrants to the region who said, 'I'm new to the area, I'm working two jobs, and I still can't afford to pay my children's school expenses because I'm only making $6.50 an hour,'" says Barbara Donnellan, director of management and finance for Arlington County, which passed a living wage ordinance earlier this year. Arlington now pays a wage of at least $10.98 an hour to its workers and requires businesses with which it contracts to do likewise. "We want to be a diverse and inclusive world-class community where each person is important," says Donnellan.

Although church groups, labor unions, and local community organizations have been involved in the campaign, the major exponent has been ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), a community-organizing group founded in 1970 that claims 700 chapters in 51 cities. Traditionally a group that knocks on doors to raise money and consciousness about discrimination in voting, housing, and banking, ACORN has found the living wage to be its most galvanizing political issue. "It's the one issue that immediately affects people's pocketbooks," says Jen Kern, director of ACORN's living wage resource center in Boston.

In practice, the living wage resembles a minimum wage enforced at the local level. The federal minimum wage is now $5.15 an hour. Living wage bills typically up this to anywhere from $7 to $11 an hour. In New Orleans, a $6.15 citywide minimum wage was adopted by popular referendum. But hotel owners sued and had it overturned by the Louisiana Supreme Court.

Wary that municipal minimum wages will run into such state constitutional impasses, most living wage ordinances apply only to city workers and contractors—and sometimes to companies that have received tax abatements from the city government. In addition to requiring vendors to pay $3 to $5 above the minimum wage, some cities are starting to mandate health benefits, extended vacations, and other extras. Omaha adopted a living wage in 2000 but rescinded it when the city council discovered it was costing too much to hire summer lifeguards.

Jared Bernstein of the Economic Policy Institute justifies the living wage by arguing that "Employers who receive tax benefits or contracts from the locality ought to give a little something back to their workforce." Many municipalities, of course, have been shameless in handing out property and sales tax exemptions in order to lure major employers, but these employers usually pay far above the minimum wage anyway.

Instead, the living wage generally applies only to government employees and contractors. Thus, it's no surprise to find the living wage strenuously supported by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, which sees private contractors as its major source of competition. Just as trade unions traditionally support federal and state minimum wage laws in order to avoid being undercut by non-union competitors, so municipal unions attempt to raise the costs of outside contracting services to make privatization less attractive to local governments. The unions also see the issue as an opportunity for recruitment. As an AFL-CIO newsletter told its members, "Living-wage campaigns are part of an overall strategy [that will] potentially enhance union organizing among workers."

Because they are generally limited to government contractors, living wage ordinances do not seem to be having much impact on local labor markets. One study in Baltimore, which in 1994 was the first municipality to adopt the living wage, found only a small effect, mostly on school bus drivers and other part-time workers. However, the law did discourage smaller companies from bidding on government contracts.

Bernstein and Kern argue that living wage ordinances have actually improved productivity. "Studies show that the higher wage cuts down on lateness and absenteeism," says Kern. "Contractors tell us, 'We would have made these improvements before, but other contractors would have underbid us.'" Still, since the smallest com-

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petitors cannot meet the new wage standards, and since the costs are imposed on all bidders, any increased expense is quickly passed through to the municipal government. In the end, the living wage is funded by taxpayers.

This doesn't bode well for the financial health of municipal governments, which are already growing at nearly three times the rate of inflation. "Over the past five years municipal spending has grown 35 percent, 22 points ahead of inflation and 15 points faster than inflation plus population growth," says Phil Kerpen, analyst with the Club for Growth. "This is not a great time to be putting more burdens on municipal budgets."

Photographers Showcase / Richard B. Levine

ACORN protesters in New York, April 21, 2002

One example of how living wage campaigns can balloon is New York, where Governor George Pataki in his 2002 reelection campaign agreed to pay health care workers a "living wage" through higher Medicaid reimbursements. The decision won the support of the 224,000-member health care workers' union. However, it only inflated New York's Medicaid bill, which is already two and a half times the national average. New York City's $3 billion appropriation for Medicaid spending now exceeds the entire municipal budget of every city in the country except Chicago and Los Angeles.

The concept of trying to guarantee a living wage to full-time workers at the bottom of the economic ladder has a long history. *A Living Wage*, published in 1912 by John A. Ryan, added the idea to the reform agenda of the Progressive Era, at a time when mechanization was making it possible for women and even children to supplant skilled tradesmen in the workforce.

The Progressives hit upon the idea that each head of household should have the opportunity to earn a "living wage," meaning enough to support himself and his family. Rather than adopting minimum wage rules across the board, reformers began by passing eight-hour days and other restrictions for women and children. This both strengthened families and limited the power of factories in hiring women and children to undercut men's wages.

The Progressive Era's "Family Wage" system eventually became a national norm, enforcing an informal rule of "one breadwinner per family." Through the 1950s, informal rules said that married women should not participate in the labor force except in cases of grave necessity. This both provided more time for childrearing and made sure employers didn't use women to cut their husbands' wages. The system worked well until a married newspaper reporter named Betty Friedan was told in 1950 that she had to leave her job after having her second child. The rest, of course, is history.

In today's atomized world, we are back to a system in which most families—especially those with low incomes—rely on more than one wage-earner. Yet living wage advocates rarely take this into account. Advocates assemble elaborate tables comparing minimum wages with average housing prices, trying to show that a person cannot support a family at the minimum wage. Yet how many families are supported by one wage-earner? By failing to differentiate between heads of households with dependents and high schoolers making a little extra money, the living wage movement falls into the old minimum-wage trap of knocking the lowest-skilled workers off the scale.

Give ACORN credit. They have built a vast network of grassroots organizations that have become a potent force in hundreds of cities, large and small, across the country. They run charter schools, register voters, organize health clinics, intervene in tenant-landlord disputes, and have generally won the loyalty of thousands of underprivileged Americans. But their plan for raising family incomes by putting the screws on government contractors is simply another way of soaking taxpayers and growing the government. ♦

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Iran's First Lady

Meet Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi, a voice for human rights in the Muslim world.

By Amir Taheri

Editor's Note: *The Nobel Committee's decision to name Iranian human-rights lawyer and activist Shirin Ebadi the 2003 peace laureate has turned her into a household name throughout Iran and the Muslim world.*

Moreover, the 56-year-old Ebadi has become an alternative source of moral authority in Iran—and a rare figure of consensus in that fractious society. With the exception of the hardline Khomeinists who have branded her "an enemy of Islam," Ebadi has won praise from virtually all Iranians—from left to right. She now possesses a capital of goodwill that few others seem to have in Iran.

What will she do with it? Will she, as some opposition leaders clearly hope, lead a list of pro-democracy candidates in next March's general elections? Will she go further and become a candidate for the presidency in 2005?

These and many other questions were posed in a recent telephone interview conducted by Amir Taheri, editor of the French quarterly Politique Internationale, *who also translated the interview from Persian. It is excerpted here.*

A few weeks ago you left Tehran for Paris as just another traveler. Now you have returned to a hero's welcome, although some had believed you might decide to stay in Europe. What are your feelings?

There was never any question of not returning. Without my attachment to Iran, my life would have no meaning. I was not prepared for what happened. I did not even know that my name had been put forward for a Nobel. But, as I said right from the beginning, I see the prize as a message from the international community to the people of Iran, especially to women, and, beyond them, to the Muslim world. The message is that human rights belong to all mankind and that peace is possible only if they are respected.

Will your Nobel prize mean a new start for the democracy movement which seems to have lost some steam in recent weeks?

I hope so. The message is that fighting for human rights in Iran is not a lonely pursuit. It will also strengthen civil society, without which no democratization is possible. A society changes when large numbers of its members change within themselves. This is happening in our country.

Can the present regime be reformed without violence?

Yes. I think nothing of lasting value can come out of violence. I think we can work within the law and seek the changes that are needed through constitutional processes. I have never done anything illegal and support peaceful means. The number of people who want reform is rising all the time.

Some say your selection is a political move by Europe to show that regime change can come through "soft power" as against the American use of "hard power" in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I don't share that analysis. The situation in Iran is different from Iraq and Afghanistan. There were no mechanisms for internal change in Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iran, there are. Europe has understood that to stop wars it is necessary to ensure respect for human rights throughout the world. This is both a principled and a pragmatic position.

You supported the election of President Khatami. Do you still regard him as a leader for reform?

I was one of millions who voted for Khatami because had we not done so, the conservatives would have won. We had no other choice. Unfortunately, however, I must admit that President Khatami has missed the historic opportunities he had. The reform and democracy movement has passed him by.

President Khatami has said that your prize is not worth "all that fuss." What is your reaction?

I respect the president's view. People are free to have their own opinions on all subjects.

Some Khomeinist figures have issued thinly disguised threats against you. Will you feel safe?

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I have learned to control my fears and am not put off by threats. As for the comments made against me, people are free to express their views. Those who fight for human rights in places like Iran, and many other developing countries, should always be prepared for the worst. But those who make threats would be wise to stop for a moment to ponder the undercurrents of history. They will see that the age of rule by fear is coming to a close throughout the world. Why should Iran be an exception?

Some say that, with time, you might become a half-forgotten icon like Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese leader who also won the Nobel peace prize.

I don't know about Burma. But I know about Iran. What is at stake is beyond me or any other individual. We have a deep-rooted and growing movement for democracy and human rights that has support in all sections of society.

And yet the situation in Iran seems blocked. In all elections, there are overwhelming majorities for reform. And yet there is no reform. Some people believe a new revolution is necessary.

I think the era of revolutions has ended. Also, there is no guarantee that another revolution would provide something better than the one we had 24 years ago. After years of reflection I have come to the conclusion that revolutions never deliver what they promise. What I am working for is a reform movement in all walks of life, political, social, cultural, and, of course, individual rights. Like me, the people of Iran are deeply disappointed with the Islamic Revolution. In the Islamic Revolution and the war with Iraq that followed, countless families lost their children and/or parents. The nation lost the flower of its youth. Also, millions of Iranians were forced into exile. The cost of this revolution will take generations to absorb. The only way out is through peaceful reform. Khatami is not the only proponent of reform. The failure of his administration is not the failure of the reform movement. In any case Khatami's second and final term will come to an end. But that will not mean the end of our people's aspirations.

Shirin Ebadi

Reuters / John Schults

In practical terms, how do you think change could come in Iran?

History is never written in advance. It is always full of surprises. Change could come through elections. What we need is an amended electoral law that allows citizens to vote for any candidate they wish. If the present system continues and the Council of the Guardians of the Constitution retains its power to fix the elections, the Iranian people are certain to massively boycott the next general election in March 2004, just as they did in the recent municipal elections.

Should the Islamic Republic be replaced with a secular regime?

There is some confusion here. What we have in Iran is not a religious regime, but a regime in which those in power use religion as a means of staying in power. If the present regime does not reform and evolve into one that reflects the will of the people, it is going to fail, even if it adopts a secularist posture. I support the separation of state and religion because the political space is open to countless views and interests. This position is actually supported by the grand ayatollahs. So it is in conformity with the Shiite tradition.

What would you say to those who say Islam is incompatible with human rights?

That they are wrong. It is true that human rights are violated in most Muslim countries. But this is a political, not a religious, reality. We have had all sorts of regimes in Muslim countries, including secularists, Marxists, and nationalists. They, too, violated human rights. If corrupt and brutal regimes oppress their people, in what way is this a sign of Islam's incompatibility with human rights? The Baathist regime in Iraq was supposedly secular. And in North Korea we do not have an Islamic regime.

So you believe that we should leave religion out of political discussions.

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As individuals we are all affected by our religious beliefs or lack of them. That is a fact of life. What I am saying is that we should not allow anyone to impose his interpretation of religion on others by force, intimidation, or peer pressure. People should stop putting the adjective Islamic before or after every word so that they can interpret everything in the interest of their corruption and brutality. They talk of "Islamic" psychology so that they can claim that women are weak, unstable, and unfit to have a role in decision-making. They talk of "Islamic" economics so that they can justify the abuse of the nation's wealth. They talk of "Islamic" education so that they can justify their policy of brainwashing children and youths. They talk of "Islamic" philology so that they can twist language to suit their aims.

Some feminist circles have hailed you as one of their own. What is your reaction?

The problem that women face in Muslim societies is not because of religion. It is a result of the patriarchal culture.

What we need is a gender-neutral reading of Islamic texts. The humiliation inflicted on women is the result of a diseased gene that is passed to every generation of men, not only by society as a whole but also by their mothers. It is mothers who raise boys who become men. It is up to mothers not to pass on that diseased cultural gene. I am not against men. I am against a patriarchal culture that denies equal rights for half of humankind.

There is some talk that you might lead a list of pro-democracy candidates in the next parliamentary election or even become a presidential candidate in 2005.

I am a human rights militant and a lawyer and have no other agenda. I can tell you that I have no plans to stand for election. The prize given to me shows that the method I have used in the past two decades has been the right one. I am the friend of the powerless, the voice of the voiceless. I must prove that I am worthy of the honor bestowed upon me.

Some opposition figures, including a grandson of Khomeini, have called for American military intervention in Iran. What is your view?

I am opposed to any foreign intervention in our affairs, whether political or military or in any other form. The people of Iran know their problems and know how to seek the solutions. All they need is moral and political support from the international community.

What are the projects you now have in mind?

The authorities have decided to definitely close two major cases on which I was working: the case of the thugs that attacked the university dormitory in Tehran, and the case of the murder of [dissident leader] Dariush Foruhar and his wife Parvaneh. The decision to close those cases is political. It means that justice will not be done. There is nothing more that I can do. But I have many other cases to pursue. I also have my nongovernmental organization for children plus programs to help women. One other project is to help with mine-clearance in provinces that were affected by the Iran-Iraq war.

Outside Iran, you do not wear the hijab. Why?

I wear it in Iran because it is imposed by law. If I don't wear it, I will be violating the law. I want that law changed, because I think the state has no business telling women whether or not they should cover their heads. I don't wear the hijab outside Iran because there is no such law. This is the case with many Iranian women. Instead of telling girls to cover their hair, we should teach them to use their heads. I am also against states that pass laws to prevent women from wearing the hijab.

Tell us a little bit about your family life.

I was born in Hamadan, but my family moved to Tehran when I was six months old. My father, the late Muhammad-Ali Ebadi, was a prominent lawyer. He was the author of a classic book on commercial law, which is still taught at universities and reissued in new editions every few years. My mother, Minoo Amidi, is alive and a great source of support for me. My husband is Javad Tavassolian, who is five years older than I and an electrical engineer. We have two daughters. The elder one, Negar, aged 22, is a graduate in communications-engineering from the Sharif University in Tehran. She is currently attending a postgraduate course at McGill University in Canada. Our younger daughter, Narguess, aged 21, is following in my footsteps by studying law at Beheshti University in Tehran.

Do you take time to look after your domestic responsibilities?

Yes. I am a mother and a housewife. My social activities may not leave me much time. But I always make sure that our home is properly organized and run.

Does your husband help you with housework?

Certainly, whenever I enlist his support. But he, too, is quite busy with his work.

Do you cook for your family, and, if yes, do they like your cooking?

I do cook the family meals. As for whether they like it or not, you have to ask my husband and my daughters.

Any message for Muslim women?

Yes. Keep fighting. Don't believe that you are decreed to have an inferior position. Study the Koran carefully, so that oppressors cannot impress you with citations and interpretations. Don't let individuals masquerading as theologians claim they have a monopoly on understanding Islam. Educate yourselves. Do your best and compete in all walks of life. God created us all equals. In fighting for equality we are doing what God wants us to do. ♦

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An Unbalanced Critique of Bush

What the international relations experts get wrong

By Gerard Alexander

The Bush administration's foreign policy has come under withering attack in recent months. Critics accuse the administration of crossing the line that separates a foreign policy strong enough to secure U.S. interests from one so muscular that it provokes other countries to block us instead. The charge boils down to this: Bush is creating new enemies faster than he is deterring old ones.

If this line of criticism is correct, then many conservative assumptions about foreign policy may be dangerously flawed. Conservative hawks want to vigorously pursue U.S. security in a world of new and uncertain dangers. But they have no desire to do it so zealously that they cause a self-defeating backlash. In this, they have no better authority than George W. Bush, who said in 2000 that if "we're an arrogant nation, they'll resent us."

The problem is that it's unclear where the line is drawn. A vocal minority claims that U.S. "aggression" has provoked worldwide resentment and "blowback," including September 11 itself. But most American observers would disagree, insisting that this country is unthreatening when compared to almost all other great powers of history, which is why the United States has provoked so little animosity. Theorists of the "realist" school of international relations explain this by describing the United States as an "offshore balancer." In this view, American forces have been committed to Europe or Asia only when an aggressor threatened to dominate those regions, and only in cooperation with local allies. Because U.S. forces were clearly there not by choice and not to stay, American intervention was generally welcomed. Whatever the reasons for its restraint, America's behavior was unlike that of normal great powers. Others detected that difference, and responded accordingly: Whereas they "balanced" against other great powers by expanding their militaries and seeking allies, America provoked very little balancing.

This view survived well after America emerged as the sole superpower. As recently as May 2000, prominent international relations scholars met to try to explain why countries were still not balancing against the United States. Stephen Walt, a prominent realist and a dean of Harvard's Kennedy School, described this absence in a chapter of the book *America Unrivaled*:

> Disagreements and policy disputes are hardly a new development in U.S. relations with its principal allies, yet there have been no significant defections [from U.S. alliances] in the ten years since the Soviet Union imploded. Russia, China, North Korea, and a few others have occasionally collaborated . . . but their efforts fall well short of formal defense arrangements. . . . [U.S.] allies may resent their dependence on the United States and complain about erratic U.S. leadership, but the old cry of "Yankee, Go Home" is strikingly absent in Europe and Asia. . . . No one is making a serious effort to forge a meaningful anti-American alliance.

Walt concluded that "balancing tendencies—while they do exist—are remarkably mild. It is possible to find them, but one has to squint pretty hard."

In the past 18 months, hawks have been bombarded with warnings that squinting is no longer needed. They are being warned that the Bush administration's policies are likely to provoke other countries to frustrate our goals rather than help us achieve them. The result would be diminished rather than enhanced U.S. security. The *New York Times* has editorialized that Bush's "lone-wolf record" and "overly aggressive stance" risk "undermining the very interests that Mr. Bush seeks to protect" by inspiring "the enmity rather than the envy of the world." This has become practically the official foreign policy

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stance of numerous intellectuals and commentators, the AFL-CIO, and the entire Democratic presidential pack.

It is also echoed by usually sober international relations scholars. The University of Chicago's Robert Pape argues that the administration's "threat to wage unilateral preventive war" crucially "changed America's long-enjoyed reputation for benign intent" and is inspiring others to balance against the United States. Stephen Walt says that Washington today is in the position of imperial Germany in the two-decade lead-up to 1914, when that country's expansionism caused "its own encirclement." Chicago's John Mearsheimer joined Walt this past winter to argue that the proposed Iraq operation was likely to "reinforce the growing perception that the United States is a bully." Each was among the nearly three dozen international relations scholars who warned in an open letter in the *New York Times* that the Iraq war would provoke "increasing anti-Americanism" worldwide.

These critics link three basic claims. The United States traditionally gained cooperation by being unthreatening. The Bush administration is departing sharply from that tradition. And this convergence with the behavior of normal great powers is causing other countries to begin balancing against us. In yet another way, history is back, except this time we are inflicting it on ourselves.

What do these critics believe is causing this seismic shift? Even before September 11, 2001, the Bush administration "unilaterally" rejected four treaties or near-agreements. It withdrew from the ABM treaty and began deploying a provocative missile defense. It expanded NATO up to Russia's borders. After September 11, it invested heavily in power-projection capabilities. Bush's 2002 *National Security Strategy* called for the United States to make "preventive" war and declared it a primary U.S. goal to prevent any other country from developing the military resources to rival us. Consistent with that doctrine, the United States invaded Iraq over the stated opposition of most governments.

Hawkish conservatives believe these policies represent no more than a robust protection of national security in the face of new threats. But that would be of small comfort if others perceive them as threatening and balance against us as a result. How do we decide who is right? The critics claim the verdict is already in, and that it favors them.

Their evidence comes in two forms. First, they showcase rising criticism of the United States as revealed in public opinion surveys, especially the ubiquitous Pew Research Center's 2002 polls conducted in 44 countries. These surveys show that high and rising percentages of people in many countries have "unfavorable" views of America, believe the United States is unilateralist, and are increasingly prone to fearing the U.S. could threaten their country. In case the policy implications of these results are not clear enough, Pew analysts helpfully conclude that "the U.S.'s perceived unilateral approach to international problems and the U.S. war on terror play large roles in shaping opinion toward the U.S." Madeleine Albright—the head of the Pew global survey project—says, "I never thought the day would come when the United States would be feared by those it has neither the intention nor the cause to harm."

Second, critics say these fears of America are already being translated into balancing actions against the United States. Most concretely, many countries refused either to endorse the invasion of Iraq, vote with the United States in the U.N. Security Council, or offer military bases. France, Germany, Russia, and China cooperated in resisting Washington's designs. The creation of an alternative global "pole" to the United States is openly invoked in diplomatic maneuvering between France, Germany, and Russia. The United States has suffered other diplomatic setbacks, including in the makeup of U.N. committees. In light of such events, Chicago's Pape concludes that "the era of soft balancing has begun," and Walt says "we are witnessing . . . the progressive self-isolation" of the United States.

If this is true, hawks should be worried that overreaching is endangering American interests. But how persuasive is this evidence? It certainly doesn't meet the standards set by international relations theorists in the past. In their own major research, for example, Walt and Mearsheimer judge that balancing behavior has occurred when countries (in Mearsheimer's words) "invest heavily in defense," transforming latent power into military capabilities; or seek explicit military alliances; or "send clear signals to the aggressor" that they are willing to take costly actions to maintain the existing balance of power. These are commonly accepted standards for measuring balancing behavior in the study of international relations. And for good reason: These muscular actions can easily be distinguished from the diplomatic friction that routinely occurs between almost all countries, even allies.

The problem with the recent criticisms is that the combination of unfavorable polls and diplomatic maneuvering falls well short of these standards. A number of critics appear to recognize this, since they describe what they now see as "soft" balancing, or "surreptitious" balancing, or "neo-" or "proto-" or "pre-"

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balancing behavior, instead of balancing plain and simple, or what you might call balancing without adjectives. But it is not clear that "soft balancing" is distinguishable from garden variety diplomatic friction.

We can easily look back at periods in which everyone agrees the United States was *not* being balanced against, and find events that were every bit as serious as those of the past 18 months. Examples abound. In the late 1950s, a West European-only bloc was formed, an American vice president confronted "Yankee, Go Home" riots in Latin America, and France created an independent nuclear capability. In the 1960s, a cluster of mostly developing countries organized the Non-Aligned Movement that defined itself against both superpowers. France pulled out of NATO's military structure. Huge demonstrations worldwide protested the U.S. war in Vietnam and its Cold War policies in general. In the 1970s, OPEC wielded its oil weapon both to punish U.S. policies in the Middle East and to transfer substantial wealth from the West. Large protests and harsh criticism from intellectuals were mounted against Reagan-era policies toward Central America, theater nuclear weapons, and missile defense. Most governments coordinated to block Reagan's efforts at reforming the U.N., isolating the Sandinistas, and sinking the Law of the Sea treaty. In fact, the dynamics of the Reagan years are very reminiscent of today's rhetoric. In the 1990s, E.U. members had repeated trade clashes with the United States and announced an independent, unified military force.

Few analysts conclude that these earlier events represented balancing against the United States. Yet they either parallel or exceed in seriousness the events that critics (sometimes the same analysts) now identify as balancing behavior. In many cases the events cited to criticize the Bush administration are simply extrapolations of earlier trends. These include:

- the formation of the European Union (initially launched in 1952), and Europe's common currency (agreed to in 1993)
- waves of extensive anti-Americanism (pervasive in Latin America in the 1950s and '60s, and Europe and elsewhere in the late 1960s and early '70s)

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• China's rapid military buildup (begun at least in the early 1990s)

• Russia, France, and China's policy of blocking serious U.N.-sanctioned use of force against Saddam (demonstrable since the mid-1990s)

• the Russia-China "strategic partnership" (declared in 1996)

• the "European troika" meetings and agreements between Germany, France, and Russia (begun in 1998)

• creation of an independent, unified European military force (first negotiated in 1952 and agreed to in 1998).

Obviously the same events can mean different things in different contexts. But unless it is made clear why these events did not constitute balancing before but do now, they are simply not persuasive evidence of American overreach.

If we really want to test whether America's post-9/11 foreign policy is provoking even incipient balancing behavior, we have to look for events that *can* be clearly distinguished from routine diplomatic friction. What does balancing plain and simple look like? International relations theorists generally have relied on two main types of evidence: "internal balancing"—higher defense budgets, troop call-ups—and "external balancing," or alliance building.

Internal balancing against a country as powerful as the United States wouldn't come cheap or easy. Trends in military spending—steeper and more durable drops in Europe and Russia since the end of the Cold War than in the United States—have resulted in a widening American lead in military technology and power projection capabilities. Even Europe's sophisticated militaries lack independent command, intelligence, surveillance, and logistical capabilities. Russia, China, and others are even less able to match the United States militarily. But in the aggregate, these disparities are the result of budgetary choices, not rigid constraints. Samuel Huntington calls the current world system "a uni-multipolar system with one superpower and several major powers." Those several major powers have latent capabilities that could be mobilized and aggregated to check the United States.

Consider the latent potential of Western Europe alone. The E.U. members jointly have more troops under arms than the United States (about 1.8 to 1.4 million). They have the organizational and technical skills to excel at command, control, and surveillance. They have the know-how to develop a wide range of high-tech weapons. And they have the money to pay for them, with a total GDP of almost $8 trillion to the U.S.'s $10 trillion. This is before we consider Japan's wealth and technology, China's manpower, and Russia's extensive arms production capacities.

These potentialities could also be exploited through alliances—external balancing. Forming alliances imposes costs; the more partners needed, the higher those costs can be, and some countries prefer to free ride. But here, too, the costs are by no means unprecedented. The tightly interwoven E.U. members can coordinate at lower cost than almost any alliance in history. The addition to them of Russia and China would create an alliance with huge capabilities and global presence.

The question is whether we can see evidence of such internal and external balancing. The answer is no.

There is a long history of countries making dogged attempts to catch up, sometimes at great cost, when they feel threatened by more advanced rivals. Such buildups can be slow to start and gather momentum. But it is when they are underway that we know internal balancing is occurring. This contrasts starkly with today's record of mobilization. China and many countries in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa are increasing military spending. But for the most part, they have been doing so for years or decades. Most other countries are also maintaining their pre-Bush trajectories in military spending, and those trajectories are flat.

This is especially visible in Europe. If diplomatic opposition over Iraq and rising suspicion and unfavorable images of the United States are valid indicators of incipient balancing behavior, then Europe is a prime place to look for follow-through. After all, Germany and France were among the most prominent opponents of the war, with France serving as the most active balancing "entrepreneur," lobbying other countries to deny Washington their cooperation. Yet there is little evidence that a build-up, as a hedge against future American actions, is even in its earliest stages.

Military spending by E.U. members, as in the United States, fell sharply after the Cold War. Unlike in the United States, it has not risen since in most cases. Most E.U. members spend militarily at rates one-half or one-third the U.S. rate, and are holding steady. Some recent spending up-ticks are tiny and almost entirely designed to address terrorism. One possible symbolic exception is flopping. Last April, four E.U. members actively opposed to the Iraq war—France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg—said they would increase both military spending and coordination. But since then, the Schröder government has *trimmed* Germany's already modest spending and its participation in joint European weapons programs. Germany is now poised to spend on the military at a rate of less than 1.4 percent of GDP and almost certainly declining, compared to 3.4 percent by the United States.

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Only France meets the dual criteria of a would-be balancer that has moved to beef up its defense spending since the lead-up to the Iraq war—from a low of 1.9 percent of GDP in 2001-2 to a projected 2.5 percent. But without matching performance by Germany and others, France's effort is isolated. And if French assertiveness alone were used as evidence of American overreach, then every U.S. administration since 1945 would have to be judged guilty.

The recent launch of a unified E.U. military force only reinforces the impression of a broad European non-response to the Bush strategy. This force of 60,000 is designed for light, rapid deployment to zones like the Balkans and is totally unsuited to continental defense. It is designed to balance against the Milosevics of this world, not the Americans.

Maybe Europeans can't spend more on their militaries, however much they might want to, because their welfare states are expensive and they agreed to strict budget deficit limits for the euro. If that's the case, they must believe that maintaining generous entitlements and adhering to technical aspects of their common currency are higher priorities than generating defenses against a potential U.S. threat. At worst, Europeans could upgrade by simply reallocating spending away from foreign aid. They aren't doing that either. It is as if, despite the rhetoric, they don't actually believe the United States might threaten them.

There is no persuasive evidence that U.S. policy is provoking the seismic shift in America's reputation that Bush's critics detect.

This disparity between rhetoric and follow-through is brought into high relief when Europe is compared with America, which *has* genuinely felt threatened since September 11, 2001. The United States has begun a formidable military build-up. This (among other things) has contributed to a deterioration from budget surpluses to deficits. But most Americans appear to accept this as a price worth paying. So far, Europeans show little comparable interest in reshuffling priorities.

A similar pattern can be seen in alliance-building: Unfavorable surveys and diplomatic friction there may be, but they are not being followed up with actual balancing behavior. In the past, threats have commonly led to substantive alliances of coordination and mutual defense. At times, this required countries to set aside old animosities, as Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong could attest. But today, even with an alliance facilitator available—Jacques Chirac's France—there is little visible change in the alliance patterns of the late 1990s. Russia-China relations still "fall well short of formal defense arrangements" (to cite Stephen Walt). The E.U. has barely more of a common defense policy than before. As international relations theorist Robert Lieber notes, NATO is expanding and thriving instead of withering. There is no evidence that cooperation between major E.U. members and Russia (or China) extends to anything beyond opposition to an invasion already over. In the Muslim world, several states prominently cooperated with that invasion. At least for now, diplomacy is strictly at the level of maneuvering and talk, indistinguishable from the friction common to virtually all periods and countries, even allies.

By all the usual standards, then, Europeans and most others are acting as if they resent some aspects of U.S. policy, are irritated by America's influence, oppose selected actions the administration has taken, and dislike President Bush more than his predecessor, but remain entirely unthreatened by the United States. Of course, it is always possible, as some argue, that balancing behavior against the United States might emerge sluggishly. But if it is unfair to look so soon for hard evidence of balancing, then it is also too soon to conclude that America's post-9/11 foreign policy has overreached. Instead of the verdict's being in, and favoring the administration's critics, the jury is still out. There is no persuasive evidence that U.S. policy is provoking the seismic shift in America's reputation that Bush's critics detect. For now, claiming to detect balancing is the analytic equivalent of shooting from the hip.

If the jury is still out, shouldn't we err on the side of caution? Not if doing so means we are so constrained by multilateralism that we deny ourselves the tools we need to protect ourselves effectively. The possible nexus—made far more imaginable by 9/11—between international terrorist groups and rogue states bent on developing weapons of mass destruction means we are in the unhappy position of asking which risks we should run, not whether we should run any at all.

What the uncertain evidence *does* invite us to do is keep an eye on real benchmarks for detecting possible overreach: credible indicators of balancing behavior against us by other countries. Watching what people do and not simply what they say—even to pollsters—remains the best test of what people really think of America. ♦

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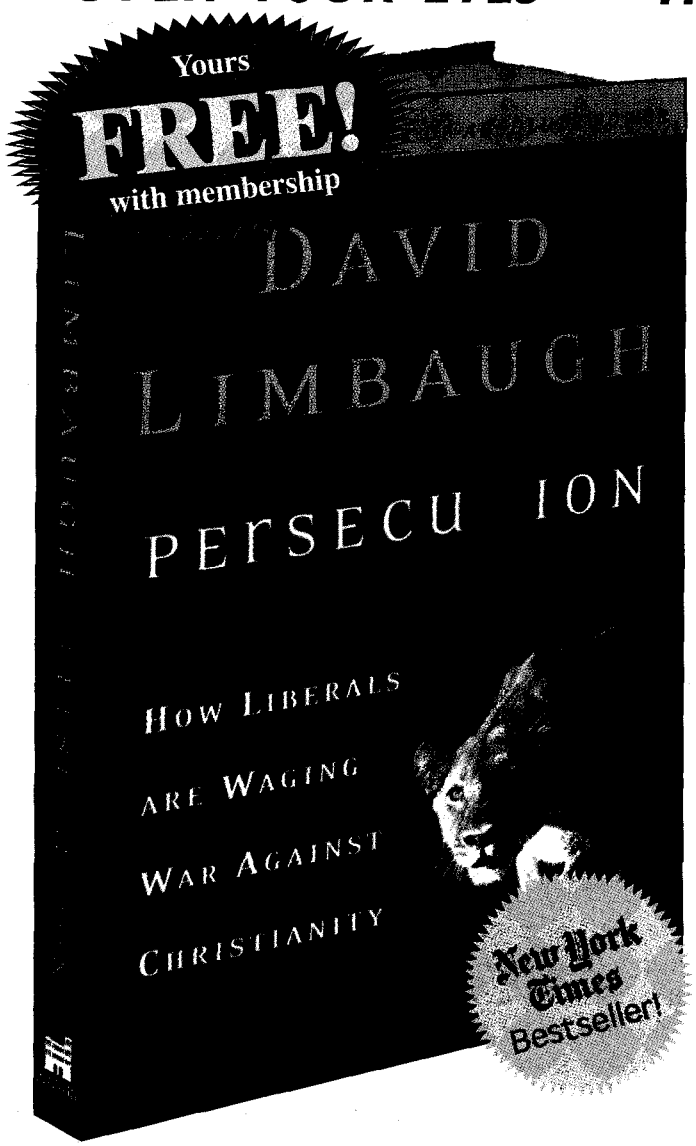
CHRISTIANS PERSECUTED? IN AMERICA?

OPEN YOUR EYES—IT'S HAPPENING RIGHT NOW!



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Making War

The triumph of just-war theory

By CHRISTOPHER LYNCH

D.G. Rossetti, *Joan of Arc* (1864). Art Resource, NY.

Who would have predicted that just-war theory would conquer American popular, political, and military culture so quickly? Before the First World War, this way of thinking was nowhere in the United States. Before the Second World War, it existed only among a handful of Catholic theorists speaking entirely to one another in journals with names like the *New Scholasticism* and the *Modern Schoolman*. Although just-war theory has its origins in a suggestion of St. Augustine's, it is in temperament, form, and matter, more typical of St. Thomas Aquinas: requiring careful distinctions among the causes, means, and ends involved when nation lifts up sword against nation. And "Thomistic" has never been the word to describe America.

So how come nearly everyone deploys the vocabulary and categories of just war these days? The theory is taught in the military academies and the most secular political-science departments. Many of the most dovish peace activists invoke it when they condemn the United States' failure to have "just cause" in the war with Iraq. The most hawkish advocates of regime change rely on it when they speak of "right intention." The argument about the role of the United Nations in Iraq essentially concerned the Thomistic question of "proper authority" for war-making. At the peak of the agitation before the invasion of Iraq, one could hardly pick up a newspaper without finding the distinction between *jus ad bellum*, justice in the reasons for going to war, and *jus in bello*, justice in the means used during a war, deployed somewhere on the op-ed page.

The Code of the Warrior
The Values and Ideals of Warrior Cultures Throughout History
by Shannon French
Rowman & Littlefield, 304 pp., $24.95

Just War Against Terror
The Burden of American Power in a Violent World
by Jean Bethke Elshtain
Basic, 208 pp., $23

When God Says War Is Right
The Christian's Perspective on When and How to Fight
by Darrell Cole
Waterbrook, 176 pp., $10.99

Out of its origins in Augustine and Thomas, and the philosophers of natural law and international relations in early modernity, and theorists of the last half century such as Paul Ramsey, just-war theory has somehow become our common intellectual language about war. With the wounds of September 11 still fresh, President Bush declared, "Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done"—in the full expectation that Americans, and even some Frenchmen, would grasp his meaning.

Of course, when the same theory is applied by both sides in a debate, one might ask what use it is. And it is primarily to address this question that a number of books on the topic have appeared over the last year—each an attempt to show the usefulness of just-war theory as a guide to moral, prudent statesmanship and a tool for the education of citizens.

Shannon French's *The Code of the Warrior*, for instance, shows the theory is alive and well in our military schools. French teaches ethics at the Naval Academy, and she gives us a glimpse of how her students grapple with the moral tensions inherent in training for a profession that entails the deliberate killing of other human beings. *The*

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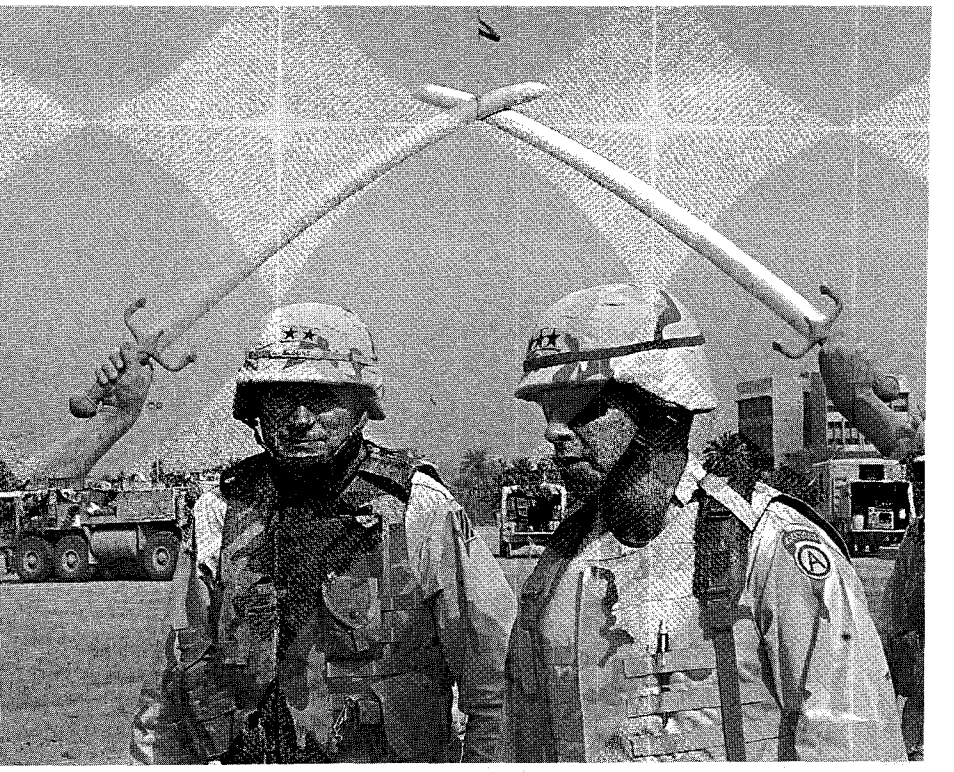
Code of the Warrior surveys and analyzes the literatures of a variety of "warrior cultures" and is, on the whole, a successful effort to explore the moral limits that soldiers place on their own conduct in battle. The work treats such classics as Homer's *Iliad* and the Knights of the Round Table, as well as several familiar but rarely studied figures such as the Japanese samurai and various Native American warrior tribes.

French's students seem to rise to the challenges she confronts them with. She begins by asking them to distinguish between a murderer and a soldier, then demands that they develop and deepen that distinction throughout the semester. The apparently grisly business of learning to "take only certain lives in certain ways, at certain times, and for certain reasons" issues in the recognition that they must hold themselves to an even higher moral standard than those of us who need never raise such urgent questions.

The Code of the Warrior is by no means flawless: Unnecessarily detailed plot summary, overlong quotation, and apparently arbitrary selection of sources sometimes tax the reader's patience. (Why, for instance, are Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius *the* places to turn to understand the ethics of Roman military conduct? Surely Julius Caesar and Tacitus have something to tell us as well.) These features, however, ensure that no cookie-cutter image of a "universal soldier" emerges from French's pages. Instead, we are confronted with an array of types that set demanding standards of moral seriousness in the face of life and death dilemmas.

French makes well her overall point that *some* restraints are necessary to keep honorable soldiers from becoming bestial killers, and she illustrates it with examples from many warrior codes. Unfortunately, the book does not treat the question of the relative value of these various codes, let alone the ultimate question of which is the best simply, rather than the best for individuals in this or that "culture." Yet perhaps French's own restraint on this theoretical question helps us recognize a lived experience that is a crucial precondition for such questioning: We hold our humanity cheap when we simply disregard the sometimes faint sense within that not everything is permitted. For this sense can give rise to another, the sense that some things may actually be required of us; from there one can begin to inquire in earnest as to just what those things might be.


L.A. Times Photos / Rick Loomis

Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* complements French's efforts well by providing a useful guide to determining what is permitted and required now of Americans, both in and out of uniform. Elshtain echoes the complaint made forty years ago by John Courtney Murray, assailing the American tendency to assume that there is no evil as long as there is peace, and no morality as soon as there is war. At the core of this assumption is the belief that peace is worth any moral price: Unless our security is directly threatened, we must not use war to thwart any evil, however heinous—and once at war, we must avail ourselves of any means, however terrible.

Elshtain reminds us of the extent to which the canons of just-war theory were not available to Americans even in the recent past. And this led, for instance, to both our delay in entering and our chosen means—particularly the incineration of tens of thousands of Japanese civilians—for fighting World War II. The conventional wisdom of Murray's times held to this amoral, all-or-nothing approach to international affairs. Even the subsequent failure of Vietnam seemed to confirm both that we should stay out of far-off conflicts and that, if compelled to fight, we should win by any means necessary.

The times have changed. Spurred by the terrorist attacks of September 11, and enabled by precision weaponry and a transforming military to use force with greater discrimination, we need to rise to corresponding heights of political and moral discernment. Elshtain captures the character of the challenge well: "The heavy burden being imposed on the United States does not require that the United States remain on hair-trigger alert at every moment. But it does oblige the United States to evaluate all claims and to make a determination as to whether it can intervene effectively and in a way that does more good than harm." We have the freedom and power to act. Elshtain raises the question of whether we will do so in a manner befitting a nation founded on the principles of the natural liberty and equality of all human beings.

By framing that question in the context of the justness of the overall war against militant Islamist terrorism, as opposed to this or that front in the

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overall war, Elshtain reminds us of the principles at stake. To that end, she notes two fateful historical differences between the contemporary West and the Arab Muslim world.

The traditional Christian distinction between spiritual and temporal power is foreign to Islam. This distinction played itself out in the West for centuries in struggles between the holy Roman emperor and the pope, and between the pope and the heads of numerous temporal states. To move beyond these struggles Enlightenment thinkers refashioned the biblical injunction to render unto God and Caesar what each is due, transforming it into the philosophical teaching of the separation of church and state. Politics was thus placed on secular foundations. Religion was allowed free rein within the spiritual realm, but secular authorities were to decide essentially political questions.

The many problems with this answer notwithstanding, Elshtain is right when she calls into question the view of our "declared enemies" that "a secular state necessarily equates to a secular society, hostile or indifferent to religion." Her related point, that crucial aspects of modern liberal democracy flow from such Christian principles as the dignity of the human person, is also on the mark. Yet we must also face the fact that while a secular state does not lead forthwith to a secular society, it nonetheless tends to tilt society ever more in that direction, so much so that one has reason to harbor concerns about the ultimate consequences of the principle of the separation of church and state, even while remaining grateful for the freedom and toleration it engenders.

Such concerns can be allayed in practice by showing that modern liberal democracy can provide, protect, and to some extent even foster the space in which human beings seek to satisfy their deepest religious longings. Absent such protection and fostering, we risk degenerating into what Elshtain aptly labels ideological secularism. Responsibility for this task falls to clergy and laity alike. At a moment such as ours, when recourse to arms is sure to continue if we choose to shoulder the burden of American power, responsible believers and thoughtful nonbelievers must regain what George Weigel has called "moral clarity in time of war." The just-war tradition is a vital means to that end.

To help revive this tradition and situate it within the contemporary context is the aim of Darrell Cole's *When God Says War Is Right*. Although written by a scholar, this is no scholarly disquisition. It is a short and accessible primer on just-war doctrine. Cole's simply stated and well-supported thesis is that at times it is not only permissible but morally imperative to go to war. In many cases, a just war justly fought is not a necessary evil but a moral necessity.

Popular punditry's now-routine use of just-war theory and the flood of recent books on the topic both suggest that a change in the nation's thinking has taken place.

Contrary to the "presumption against violence" codified by the American Catholic bishops' 1983 *Challenge for Peace*, Cole vigorously argues that "classic just-war doctrine as articulated by the Church does *not* view all use of force as evil; rather, it declares that war can actually be a positive act of love entirely consistent with the character of God. Love of God and neighbor impels Christians to seek a just peace for all, especially for their neighbors, and military force is sometimes an appropriate means for seeking that peace."

At the crux of the problem is the Christian enjoinder not to repay evil with evil. His key contention is that the use of military force that meets just-war criteria—reasonably interpreted—is as morally defensible as the force used by a police officer who tackles a fleeing thief or a parent who punishes an older brother for beating up his younger brother. And no less than the good cop or parent, a good soldier must cultivate virtues that can be considered their own reward as well as a positive good for the country he serves.

To be sure, matters of international relations are far more complex and terrible than these analogies suggest, but morally speaking they are the same. Cole insists that a host of circumstances must obtain for the use of force to be just: It must be carried out with discrimination and proportion in a just cause by a rightful authority convinced that no other means will suffice, and with a reasonable hope of success and the intent to do good. Yet he also insists that if they do in fact obtain all this, it would be unjust *not* to use force.

John Paul II himself, the most visible proponent of peace on the world stage, acknowledges that the duly constituted officers of sovereign states are the rightful authorities for deciding matters pertaining to their own security; and, contrary to countless newspaper headlines, he did not declare the war in Afghanistan or Iraq to be unjust. Whatever the pope's final position, it is safe to say that he has meditated well on the mysterious relationship between God's justice and His mercy. From his belief that his office compels him to make urgent pleas for mercy in international affairs, it does not follow that John Paul condemns as unjust a particular recourse to war. Even less does it follow that other religious authorities or persons of good will should simply mimic his pleas without regard to their stations, missions, and duties.

Much work remains to be done before America fully internalizes the canons of just war, but popular punditry's now-routine use of the theory and the flood of recent books on the topic suggest that a change in the nation's thinking has taken place.

The results should be fascinating to watch. ♦

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The Case for the Defense

Midge Decter sketches the life and achievements of Donald Rumsfeld. **BY PETER D. FEAVER**

Few public servants have had as wild a ride as Donald Rumsfeld. His inauguration as secretary of defense in 2001 was greeted with remarkably favorable press attention. He was called the best prepared defense secretary ever, having already done the job once—not to mention having served in elected office and in a host of other political appointments, even as a presidential candidate, as well as having been a successful corporate executive. He was the man who went toe-to-toe in bureaucratic fights with Henry Kissinger and lived to tell about it.

Rumsfeld
A Personal Portrait
by Midge Decter
Regan, 220 pp., $24.95

By August 2001 Rumsfeld had morphed into a "failed cabinet member." He was considered rude and accused of alienating much of the top brass in the Pentagon and apparently most members of Congress. The betting money was that Rumsfeld would be the first Cabinet official to be thrown off the sled to the wolves.

Then, on September 12, 2001, Rumsfeld morphed again, into the fearless leader who rushed towards the impact zone of the Pentagon attack and threw himself into the breach helping care for the wounded. Over the course of the ensuing war in Afghanistan, Rumsfeld climbed to the dizziest heights of popularity, earning the coveted moniker of "sex symbol," and the highest badge popular culture can offer: favorable treatment in *Saturday Night Live* skits.

But the worm turned for Rumsfeld once again in the run-up to the Iraq war and the early days of that conflict. He was no longer sexy but boorish, a warmonger who needlessly alienated our allies. He was the micro-manager who committed the sins of Robert McNamara, tinkering with war plans and jeopardizing the mission by imposing an ideology of transformation onto force-sizing and deployment decisions.

Of course, then Baghdad fell, and he was again a media darling who showed those retired generals embedded in television studios that they were hopelessly out of touch with modern combat.

And now, having won the war, Rumsfeld is accused of losing the peace. While work proceeds on rebuilding Iraq, Rumsfeld is re-vilified—it's simply a matter of cutting and pasting trenchant paragraphs from earlier attacks—by an even larger coalition of critics. Just this week, Rumsfeld authored an "off-message" memo about the war on terrorism that was leaked to the press, presumably by an internal enemy determined to see his wings clipped even further.

Enter Midge Decter's new biography, *Rumsfeld*. It is surely fitting that Rumsfeld is the first figure in the Bush administration besides the president to get his own full biography. It is a certainty that this won't be the last. But it is a good bet that this will be the most favorable.

Midge Decter is a big fan of Donald Rumsfeld. The biography opens with Decter recounting an anecdote about a Manhattan doyenne gushing over Rumsfeld in 2001 and closes with a peroration on Rumsfeld's "manliness." In between are passages exploring Rumsfeld's popularity and the manifold faults of his many critics. This is as much hagiography as biography. Rumsfeld an *objet désiré*. Rumsfeld as Hemingway—he even impulsively ran with the bulls at Pamplona!

Which is not to say that ordinary folks, even Rumsfeld's critics, should give the book a miss. On the contrary, there is much to recommend. The book is elegantly written, and clearly Decter had access to people who are not talking to reporters on a day-to-day basis and is able to offer up many nuggets of insight and perspective. For instance, according to Decter, Rumsfeld got the nod to be secretary of defense when Senator Dan Coats blew his interview with President Bush by asking for assurances that he would not be subordinate to Secretary of State Colin Powell; Bush evidently took this as a sign of weakness and looked for someone who would not need reassuring from the president. The first President Bush did not like Rumsfeld because he thought that Rumsfeld had maneuvered to get him appointed director of the CIA to sabotage Bush's future electoral prospects.

Likewise, details from Rumsfeld's early years are remarkably prophetic. As a junior congressman, he picked fights with the Republican leadership

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All photos: Regan Books.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld with General Thomas Franks; (opposite) as a Naval aviator in the 1950s.

in the House. He was doggedly reform-minded in every post—whether it was at the Office of Economic Opportunity under Nixon or at Searle, the troubled pharmaceutical company he turned around. He was a risk-taker and did not budge under fire, even when a multi-billion-dollar business deal with Monsanto looked in trouble. Perhaps most significantly, at least since détente, Rumsfeld has understood that weakness can be just as provocative as belligerency. The same logic that led him to be skeptical about arms control led him to interpret the attacks of September 11 as symptomatic of enemies' viewing America as a paper tiger.

Decter leaves relatively unexplored the questions that are dogging Secretary Rumsfeld now. Did he underestimate the challenges of rebuilding Iraq? Did he get out of his lane to challenge Powell, or has Powell been pulling strings behind Rumsfeld's back? Has Rumsfeld over-corrected for weak civilian control during the 1990s by imposing overweening civilian control now? To what extent does Rumsfeld's badgering style of management—Decter has him claiming proudly that he sends back papers for corrections as many as seven times—create more problems than it solves?

A fair exploration of these sorts of questions might put a bit of tarnish on the halo Decter has given Rumsfeld. Yet here is where one appreciates Decter's contribution.

The vilification of Rumsfeld, especially abroad but even in the mainstream American press, is absurdly excessive, and Decter is absolutely right to provide a favorable counter-context. The over-reaction to an offhand remark contrasting Old and New Europe tells us far more about the pathologies of Rumsfeld's enemies than it does about Rumsfeld's own diplomatic prowess. Decter shows that many of the critical portrayals of Rumsfeld in the press are as much a caricature as is the famous *Saturday Night Live* skits.

You know a man by his enemies and by his friends. In Rumsfeld's case, both his friends and enemies agree on one thing: He is larger than life. Such a remarkable man deserves several biographies, and if one of them venerates a bit, we need not worry; the next is bound to denigrate a bit too much. ♦

Talking Back

John McWhorter on the degradation of the American language. BY MARTIN LEVIN

John McWhorter is a professor of linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. His specialty is Creole languages, but he's better known outside the university as an enemy of social stereotypes that he sees as racial cul de sacs. He materialized as a celebrity public intellectual in 2000 with his bestseller *Losing the Race*, in which he argued that the advancement of black youth was hindered by a cult of "victimology" that discouraged success. Two years later, in a polemic in the *Washington Post*, he characterized the idea of "diversity" as "an Orwellian euphemism for treating middle-class black students as lesser minds." The Supreme Court, says McWhorter, should "outlaw the use of 'diversity' as a fig leaf for policies that have kept two generations of black students from showing what they are made of."

Doing Our Own Thing
The Degradation of Language and Music and Why We Should, Like, Care
by John McWhorter
Gotham, 304 pp., $26

In *Doing Our Own Thing: The Degradation of Language and Music and Why We Should, Like, Care*, he takes up the public consequences of his academic specialty. The title is misleading. The author is not one of those fussbudgets

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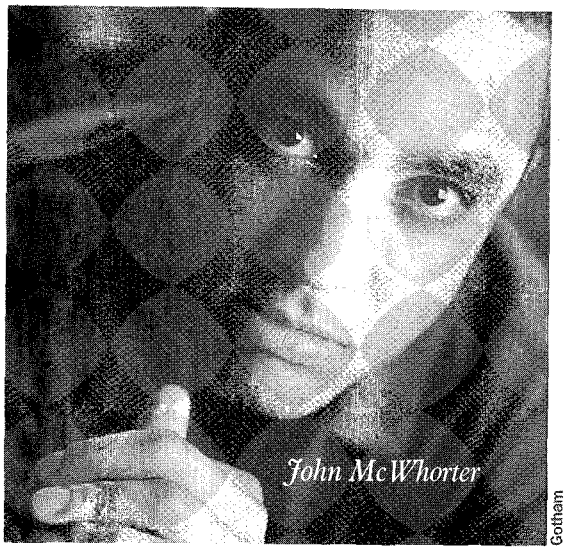
John McWhorter

Gotham

worried about dangling modifiers or misusing "disinterested" to mean "uninterested." He has his eye on a more critical phenomenon: our national shift from a written to an oral culture, which, he argues, "has had broad and profound effects." Bad ones. His conclusion here is that our ability to write, speak—and maybe think—has been degraded by cultural wear and tear.

McWhorter is annoyed at being pigeonholed as a "black conservative." As a corrective, he sprinkles this book with old standbys from left-wing boilerplate, most of which happen to be irrelevant to his subject matter, as in "We have a President many assume to be underqualified and illegitimately instated." He quotes admiringly from Amiri Baraka, aka LeRoi Jones, the defrocked poet laureate of the Garden State, whom he sees as the populist opposite to Edna St. Vincent Millay. (There's an army of contenders who can more poetically fill that slot, beginning with Carl Sandburg.)

When he sticks to his subject, McWhorter can offer fresh insights. He regrets that English diction is taking a beating. It was once customary to speak the written language. But in the era of email and the cell phone, there has been a shredding of formal diction. Instead of speaking the written language, we're now writing the spoken language. The rhetoric of the Gettysburg Address has given way to the style of Jack Kerouac. Even the speeches of John F. Kennedy, he notes, now seem a shade archaic.

My problem with *Doing Our Own Thing* is that its rhetoric gets in the way of the message. The author rambles. Phrases like "as I have noted before" have the aroma of a classroom lecture. But his ideas muster vigor enough to survive his style. McWhorter connects the takeover by the spoken word with "the mainstreaming of the counterculture" in the late 1960s. He warns that "the new linguistic order compromises our facility with the word and dilutes our collective intellect. . . . A society that cherishes the spoken over the written . . . is one that marginalizes extended, reflective argument . . . the implications for an informed citizenry are dire."

But not all of the assault on language can be blamed on oral communication. Deconstructionism in the universities relies entirely on the written word to make meaning impenetrable. McWhorter offers this sample from Paul Fry: "It is the moment of nonconstruction, disclosing the abstention of actuality from the concept in part through its invitation to emphasize, in reading the helplessness—rather than the will to power—of its fall into conceptuality."

The implosion of popular music parallels the degradation of language. About this the author is ambivalent: "Just as we talk when we make speeches, and write more and more like we talk, and just as our poetry imitates talking, we adore music that just talks." Music that "just talks," namely rap, minus melody and harmony, is "spoken music." Call me a longhair, but to me it's anti-music.

In *From Dawn To Decadence*, Jacques Barzun attributes social decay to the decline of authority. So does McWhorter. (He classifies positive values as B.C.: "Before the counter-culture.") The legacy of written English, he says, is not being passed on, or if it is, it's "through a bottleneck." The result is that we live in a country "with less pride in its language than any society in recorded history."

What's the prognosis? The worst case is that we'll become so alienated from the written language that it can turn into a completely foreign tongue, like Esperanto. On the other hand, the author recalls that "this is not the first time English has undergone a diminishment of resources." Back in the Middle Ages, gender endings dropped out and the language survived. McWhorter suggests that we may be experiencing yet another phase that the culture and the language will have to assimilate. Stay tuned. ♦

For Whom the Belle Tolls

The importance of being Ernest Hemingway's wife.

BY LISA SINGH

You can probably guess—if only from the time he shouted at her, "I'll show you, you conceited bitch. They'll be reading my stuff long after the worms have finished with you"—that the five-year marriage between Ernest Hemingway and the war correspondent Martha Gellhorn was not the happiest of literary matches in the twentieth century. Much of the time, it seemed to devolve into brawls over who was top literary dog.

Neither then nor now is Gellhorn the winner. For all her efforts to be a leading journalist and novelist—at any cost, including leading two marriages to divorce and procuring four abortions in order to report on wars from Spain to Vietnam—her name now barely res-

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onates. She covered more wars than Hemingway and had a prodigious output: seventeen books and hundreds of articles for the likes of the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *New Yorker* on such milestones as Dachau's liberation and the Nuremberg Trials. But Gellhorn, who committed suicide in 1998 at the age of eighty-nine, is remembered today only for her rocky years with Hemingway, spent largely in Cuba, where the couple lived, loved (at times), and fought in a house full of cats, and where Gellhorn, ever hostile to domesticity, dashed Hemingway's hopes for a daughter by aborting their child.

As Caroline Moorehead tells the story in *Gellhorn: A Twentieth Century Life*, the future Mrs. Hemingway was born into an affluent home. Gellhorn and her brothers grew up atheists, attended an "Ethical Society" Sunday school, and later went to a co-educational high school where students gardened and were taught that there's no difference between male and female physiognomy. Moorehead seems to love all this as the tale of the modern, independent woman. But the biographer also recognizes the attendant discontents and the perils such a woman faces in an uneven marriage.

Always an agonized writer whose talent never matched her ambition, Gellhorn once complained that Hemingway "never suffered from questions, but always felt that he was delivering the Tablets of Stone, in the best possible style." While such resentment rendered her marriage to Hemingway a battleground—once, a drunken Hemingway slapped Gellhorn with the back of his hand, prompting her to ram his prized Lincoln into a tree—it was at least a productive one; at no other time did Gellhorn write as much as during her years with him. Yet, till the end of her life, no one was allowed to mention Hemingway's name in connection with hers. To do so invited a cold stare or, in other cases, legal action. Part of that aversion spoke to the anger she felt over his name eclipsing her own. During their marriage, she was irked when a prepublication notice for one of her novels referred to her only as Hemingway's wife. She reminded her editor at *Collier's* that all her articles were to be signed Gellhorn, "always: that is what I always was, and am and will be."

Hemingway and Gellhorn

Henry Holt

Gellhorn's fierce dislike of introspection also explains her disdain for any discussion of Hemingway. For a woman who copiously filled notebooks with details on the war refugees she championed over her sixty-year career, her own personal dramas remained off-limits, even to herself. Not surprisingly, Gellhorn never wrote her autobiography (the only thing that comes close is a whimsical, self-deprecating account of her many journeys in *Travels with Myself and Another*, in which Hemingway appears in one story as UC, or Unwilling Companion). Carl Rollyson, in his 2001 biography of Gellhorn, *Beautiful Exile*, confirmed that the most important part of Gellhorn's life was indeed her marriage to Hemingway, which Rollyson said she sacrificed for a "selfish life of adventure and glory." (Gellhorn called Rollyson a "wretched man" and labeled an earlier version a "paean of hate.")

Gellhorn
A Twentieth Century Life
by Caroline Moorehead
Henry Holt, 480 pp., $27.50

Moorehead aims for more than Rollyson's obsessions with Gellhorn's good looks, and the flock of men she slept with. There's still plenty of gossip, as Moorehead chronicles the St. Louis native's rise from Bryn Mawr dropout to war correspondent who had affairs with married men, swam naked, and in later years, found herself devastated by writer's block—"lockjaw of the brain," as she called it—and fading good looks, both of which made her turn to antidepressants and plastic surgeons. Gossip aside, Moorehead, whose mother was a close friend of Gellhorn's, tries to show that the writer's relevance lies not only in her connections to Hemingway, Eleanor Roosevelt, Leonard Bernstein, and H.G. Wells, but in her work as a war correspondent in a field that was largely the preserve of men.

But, the truth is, Gellhorn's journalism is largely dated. She sneered at what she called "that objectivity s—" and promoted causes with a partisan approach that sometimes got in the way of truth. In one of her earliest pieces, from 1936, she described a lynching as if she had witnessed it; she hadn't. When she championed the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War, she, like Hemingway, turned a blind eye to atrocities committed by the Republicans, leaving her reportage with none of the timelessness of Orwell's. And during a 1941 trip to report on Chiang Kai-shek's regime, she never mentioned the brutality of the Chinese Nationalists. As for her novels, no one

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ever thought her a great novelist, arguably because she was always more comfortable recording than delving. As Gellhorn once observed, "Who said: '*Je pense, donc je suis*'? Descartes? I think it wrong. I act, therefore I am. We must be the product and sum total of our actions."

Throughout her life, Gellhorn, an American expatriate who ultimately lived in more than a dozen homes, traversed some fifty countries, often at a frenetic pace to escape boredom—that word is probably the most often used in Moorehead's biography, that and "brood," which Gellhorn did plenty of, as she pondered the world's evils. "I feel angry, every minute, about everything," she once said. In many ways, Gellhorn's sympathies were with the American left. She hated McCarthy, opposed the Vietnam War, decried Thatcher and Reagan, and gushed over Clinton. But she was a hawk on Israel and had no sympathy for the Palestinian cause, which Moorehead attributes both to Gellhorn's encounter with Dachau, which shattered her belief in man's perfectibility, and with her Jewish roots (Both her parents were half Jewish).

"Blondes," her father said, "only work under compulsion." Gellhorn's compulsion to work came from her desperate desire to escape restlessness and boredom. (As for sex, she later confessed that it never appealed to her.) Like many women who put off domestic life for a career, Gellhorn found herself at thirty-seven suddenly conscious of the passage of time. "I want a child," she wrote around this time. "I will carry it on my back in a sealskin papoose and feed it chocolate milk shakes and tell it fine jokes and work for it and in the end give it a hunk of money, like a bouquet of autumn leaves, and set it free. I have to have something, being still (I presume) human."

What Gellhorn got was a boy, Sandy Gellhorn, by adoption. She never did give him milk shakes. Obsessed over her son's fluctuating weight, she stated in her will that his allowance would be contingent on his weight. Sandy, for his part, escaped into drugs. "I have no respect for you," she wrote him. "You have absolutely no style, your mind is as interesting as blotting paper."

Boredom equaled domesticity for Gellhorn, and her writing expressed personal feelings only in the abstract. Gradually, the very strengths she had relied on—writing and looks—failed her. In her final years, beset by writer's block, she longed for a daughter. She read thrillers. She continued to travel, even though she was nearly blind and deaf.

One day, knowing she had inoperable cancer of the ovary and liver, she took the Hemingway route, ending her life. In the end, the only woman to walk out on Hemingway was best summed up by the man himself: "Martha loves humanity," he once said, "but she can't stand people." ♦

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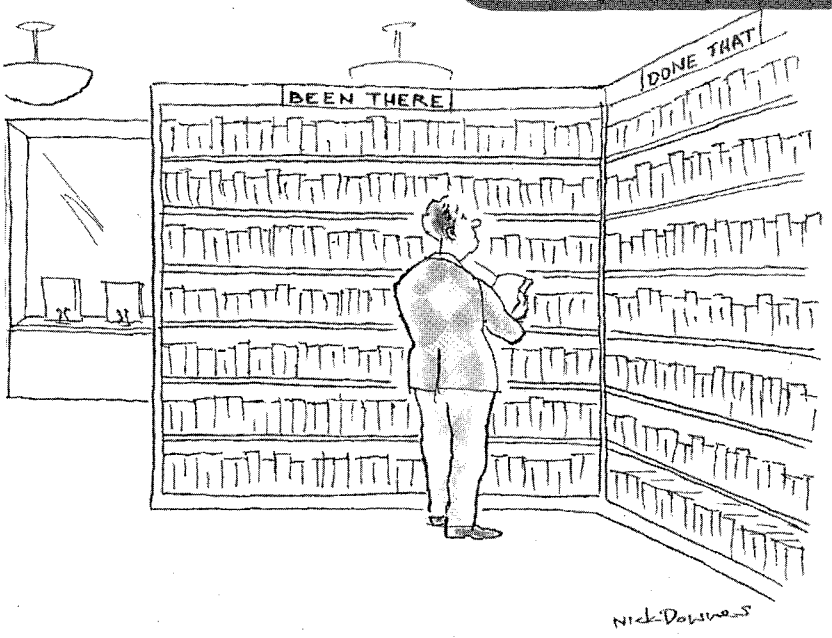

The Bunker Mentality

Congress throws a whole lot of money down a whole lot of holes. But there are holes, and then there are *holes*, and the Capitol Visitor Center was a money pit from the beginning. Back in 1991, when Congress first approved the sprawling, underground construction, Dan Glickman, a congressman from Kansas, denounced the project. Why should we bother spending so much on a visitors center, he reasoned, when "most people can't afford to visit Washington?"

What Glickman missed, however, was that the planned center would be a reason for people *not* to visit Washington. Last January, the critic Catesby Leigh excoriated in THE WEEKLY STANDARD the subterranean depression that seems to have possessed the designers of the federal government's architecture. What does it say about a culture, he reasonably asked, when it has so lost its nerve that its first impulse for a new public building or monument is to dig a hole in the ground and bury the result?

Forget the cost for a moment. Among all the plans to burrow out a prairie-dog town under Washington, the worst remains the Capitol Visitor Center, which is an aesthetic disaster of astonishing proportions. It closes off to the public the elegant symbol of democracy in the east front stairs. It insists that the proper way to visit the Capitol is by passing through five acres of underground bunker (a larger footprint than the Capitol's). And, perhaps worst of all, it will turn a trip to the home of Congress into a multimedia extravaganza in which the tourist never gets to the Capitol itself—screened off by theaters, gift shops, a cafeteria, and a 16,500-square-foot gallery.

Of course, the cost is hard to forget. The Capitol Visitor Center is Washington's version of Boston's "Big Dig," the construction boondoggle that has plagued Massachusetts's commuters since its inception in 1987, with astronomical overruns of time and money—and more time and money, and yet more time and money.

When Glickman voiced his concern in 1991, the Capitol Visitor Center was expected to cost $71 million. When Leigh wrote earlier this year, the pricetag had ballooned to $370 million. And when the *Hill* newspaper recently asked GAO comptroller general David Walker about the project, he admitted that the current expenditure is $395 million, with "no end in sight." If the cost of the Capitol Visitor Center were to approach that of Boston's Big Dig—the current price of which is an estimated $16 billion—it wouldn't come as a surprise.

Partial victory was gained last week, in one battle of THE WEEKLY STANDARD's long war to cure Washington's subterranean blues, when the National Park Service decided not to include the underground visitors' center for the Washington Monument in its budget proposal to Congress. We'd like to believe that the plan is truly dead, but the Park Service has been proposing to burrow underneath the Mall for thirty-seven years. Security concerns since the terrorist attacks of September 11 gave new life to what had become a moribund project, and we fear that the Park Service hasn't yet come to terms with the fact that it was a bad and ugly idea to begin with.

If nothing else, the compromise security plan for the giant obelisk will be cheaper than an underground dig: about $15 million for vehicle barriers of landscaped circles, separated by two-foot-high stone walls. And it will certainly be more attractive than the concrete highway barriers and construction fences that currently scar the central Mall in the name of security.

But Judy Scott Feldman, president of the National Coalition to Save Our Mall, declared the vehicle-barrier walls "unnecessary and ruinous to the scenic slopes." And there were, in fact, better ways to go—either in doing a genuine relandscaping of the small knoll on which the Monument sits or in using less obtrusive metal and stone ballards to prevent vehicle entry while preserving the traditional appearance.

Still, better to put up a few walls and landscaped circles than to dig a multimedia bunker. At least it will allow visitors to walk up to one of democracy's towering monuments. ♦

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Parody

MOVES

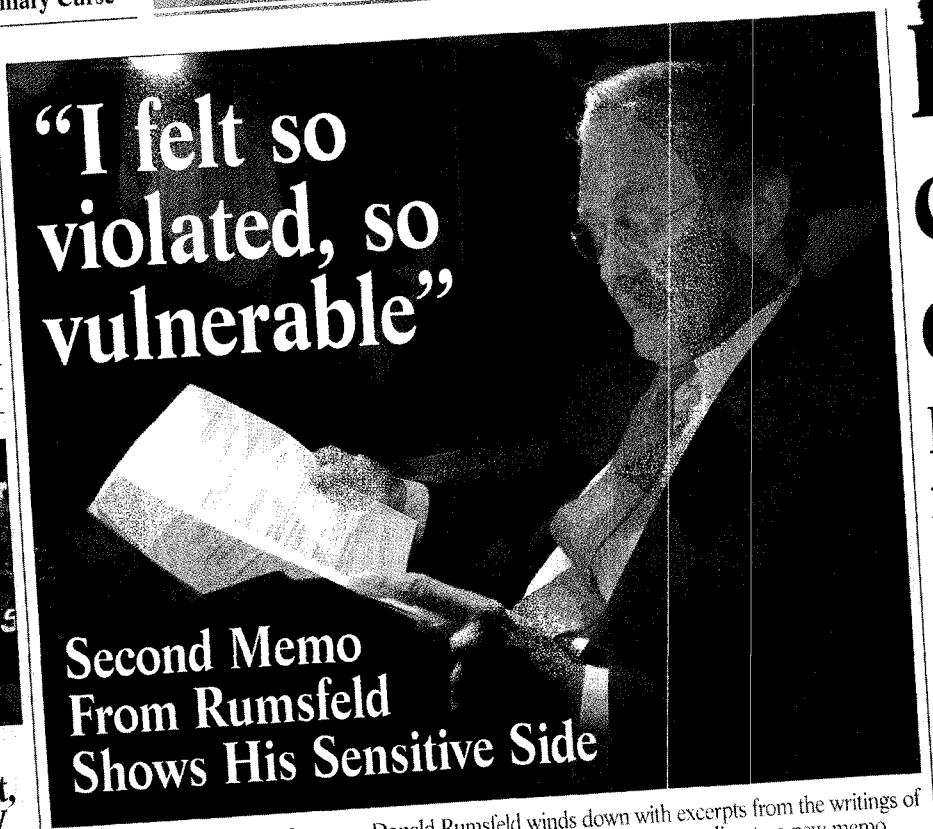
Expos head to Vegas

Renamed team now 'Born Losers,' 1C
■ Also: Yanks fans decry 'Hillary Curse'

TODAY

NO. 1 IN THE USA

"I felt so violated, so vulnerable"



Second Memo From Rumsfeld Shows His Sensitive Side

Getting in touch: Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld winds down with excerpts from the writings of Khalil Gibran. Recent leaks have left Rumsfeld with self-esteem issues, according to a new memo.

By Shannon Clark and Davis Talbot
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — For the second time in as many weeks, an internal memo written by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has been obtained by *USA Today*. Addressed like the first memo to his top military and civilian aides, it reveals none of his trademark confidence.

Although last week he boldly quipped his way through a news conference after the first memo leaked, this second note to his top deputies shows a much different side of the publicly pugnacious Secretary of Defense.

"When I read my private memo on the front page of *USA Today*, I was gulping for air. How could you do this to ME?!" Rumsfeld wrote. "I feel like Val Plame and Joe Wilson—so violated, so vulnerable. Your betrayal (and you know who you are) has broken my heart. I thought we had bonded with each other. Remember the management retreat weekend? Remember the 'trust fall' when I closed my eyes and fell straight back, and the four of you caught me? We hugged and cheered, and swore our loyalty to each other. Now, that seems so long ago . . . like a scene from *The Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood* that never really happened."

Much of the memo dwells on Rumsfeld's feelings of betrayal, and the depression which he has "tried to mask in public with my 'game face.'"

"Iraq is a mess," he confides. "Colin and Condi hardly talk to me anymore, and the president has started calling me 'Don' instead of using my special nickname."

Cover Story

All of this stress, he acknowledged, has taken a toll.

"I eat constantly," he wrote. "I retain water. I feel fat. Sometimes I feel weepy for no reason."

Rumsfeld ended with a plea for help.

"What can we do about these leaks? Maybe we need another retreat to get back in touch with our 'inner loyalty.' My door is always open, as I hope my heart will be again, someday.

"Hugs as always, DHR."

Please see COVER STORY next page ►

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NOVEMBER 3, 2003

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When Patients Pay, Costs Come Down

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The past several years have seen dramatic attempts to control costs in the U.S. health care marketplace. These attempts have given rise to unprecedented dissatisfaction and widespread skepticism about managed care among patients, doctors, and insurers. Moreover, health care costs keep rising. **Despite the recognized failure of managed care to control costs, and the failure of Canadian-style health care to deliver timely access to high-level medical care, there is now a call for even more bureaucracy**: government-directed nationalized health care, the opposite of what we need. What we need in the United States is an infusion of free market exposure, giving patients authority for decisions about health care and responsibility for spending their health care dollars.

What would be the effect of such remedies on health care costs? Since medical technology is considered a prime cause of the high costs of medical care, let's look at one such case in point—whole-body computed tomography (CT) screening centers, which use sophisticated and expensive imaging technologies. Over the past decade, hundreds of these centers have opened, primarily in affluent population centers in California and the Northeast. Patients are self-directed to these centers—there is no need for physician referral or input. And patients pay directly out of pocket, with no insulation from the price of their medical care by insurance agencies. When given the authority and financial responsibility for these tests, patients have exercised value-conscious purchasing. The costs have dramatically lowered over time; what was once a $1,500 scan is now often advertised at one-third of that price!

Similar free market–driven price reductions have been seen with other advances in medicine. Laser surgery for vision correction was initially not a covered surgical procedure; thus people desiring this treatment paid for it directly. Charges for this surgery came down by more than half over the first several years. A number of cosmetic plastic surgery procedures are also not covered by traditional insurance; again, prices diminish over time as consumers factor cost into their decision-making process. Out-of-pocket expenses for health care are important to consumers—**consideration of price is an essential component of a free market economy, and health care is no exception.**

Cost controls have been attempted numerous times in a variety of other markets in the past, and the consequences have been disastrous. We do not need more insurance coverage with increases in benefits. In fact, the opposite—exposing medical care to free market economics—is essential. More-direct spending of money by patients will increase competition and drive down costs. Our world leadership in advanced medical care and access to it are in jeopardy if a nationalized health care system, with more governmental controls and isolation of patients from value considerations in spending their health care dollars, is put into place.

—Scott W. Atlas, M.D.

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